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A CHANGE IN THE CABINET

BY

H. BELLOC

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OLD SAW

SEVENTH EDITION

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A CHANGE IN THE CABINET

CHAPTER I

SIR—or to speak more correctly, the Right Honourable Sir T. Charles Repton, Bart., M.V.O., O.M., Warden of the Court of Dowry, a man past middle age but in the height of industry, sat at breakfast in his house: a large house overlooking Hyde Park from the North, close to the corner of the Edgware Road, and therefore removed by at least a hundred yards from the graphic representation which marks the site of the old Permanent Gallows that once stood at Tyburn.

I have said that he was Warden of the Court of Dowry, and the reader, if she has any acquaintance with parliamentary affairs, will remember that at the time of which I speak, the month of March, 1915, that post commonly carried with it Cabinet rank. The experienced in political matters will certainly induce that he was also in the House of Commons. He sat there for Pailton, a borough which had been the last to elect him after previous experiences in Merionethshire, Kirkby, Bruton, Powkeley and the Wymp division of Dorset, in which last his somewhat constrained and cold manner had perhaps led to his defeat.

It was not his first experience of office, but he had never stood so high in the Councils of the Nation, nor had his presence in the Cabinet ever more weighed with the young and popular Prime Minister (who was suffering slightly from his left lung) than at this moment. For though Charles Repton did not belong by birth to the

group of families from which the Prime Minister had sprung, he was of those who, as they advance through life, accumulate an increasing number of clients, of dependants and of friends who dare not trifle with such friendships.

In figure he was tall and somewhat lean; he was clean-shaven; his brilliant white hair was well groomed; his brown eyes were singularly piercing, and, in contrast with his head, two thick, very dark and strongly arched eyebrows emphasised his expression. He was by persuasion at this time of his life a Second Day Wycliffite, and had indeed professed his connection with that body since at least his fortieth year, before which period in his career he had permanently resided in a suburb of Leicester, to which in turn he had removed from Newcastle.

By profession he was, or rather had been, a solicitor, in which calling he had ever advised those clients who had the wisdom to accumulate wealth to leave the investment of it at his discretion, nor were they disappointed in the regular receipt of a moderate but secure income calculated at a reasonable rate; while to those who (for whatever reason) lay under the necessity of borrowing, he was ever ready to advance at a somewhat higher rate such sums as he had at his disposal.

But this humdrum course of professional life could never satisfy abilities of his calibre. Shortly after his entry into political life he had undertaken the management of numerous industrial ventures, several of which had proved singularly successful, while those which had been less fortunate came to grief through the action of others than himself; nay it was often shown when the winding-up order came that such risks had attracted but little of his spare cash.

He was that morning in March, 1915, eating an egg. He had before him a copy of the *Times*, the affairs of which newspaper were among his most valued con-

nections. The moments he could spare from its perusal were given to the methodical cutting open of envelopes and the glancing at their contents,—an exercise which it was his rule most methodically to pursue before he permitted his secretary to deal with the answers. Indeed some one or two of these missives he put into his pocket to be dealt with at his private leisure.

He was alone, for his wife—Maria, Lady Repton—would commonly affect to come down after he had left the house; and this, no matter how late divisions might have kept him upon the previous evening, he invariably did at the hour of half-past nine. I may add that he had no children, but could boast no less than five horses in town and sixteen in the country, all his own property, and used to drag in the country I know not how many vehicles; in London three, each suitable for its own function. Of motor cars he kept but one, but that large and in colour a very bright sky-blue. As he had no proficiency in riding, he did not indulge in that exercise; but he was fond of golf and was acquainted with all the technical terms of the game.

To do him justice he was not without means, nay, he was what many would call wealthy, and the salary of £5000 to which, amid the enthusiastic cheers of the Legislature, the Wardenship of the Court of Dowry had recently been raised was of no great consequence to his position.

To another, alas! in the vast and heartless city, such a salary was shortly to mean far more,—and GEORGE MULROSS DEMAINE, upon whom I will not for the moment linger, would have been even more benefited in pocket than in status by the handling of it.

Careless, however, as Sir Charles Repton might be of a fringe of income obtainable only while his own Party were in office, it was imagined that he was not a little attached to other advantages connected with his Wardenship. It is doubtful whether a man of this

firm, reticent and dominating character could really be attached to such accidents of his post as the carrying of a model ship, bareheaded, in the great procession upon Empire Day, the wearing upon state occasions of shoes which curled up at the toe and were caught back to the ankles by small silver chains, or the presence upon these ornaments of several tiny bells that jingled as he walked ; anachronisms of this kind can have produced little but discomfort in one of his stern mould when, upon the rare occasions of court functions, he was compelled to adopt the official dress. But there was more !

The Wardenship of the Court of Dowry carried with it something regal in that great world of affairs in which he moved, and bitter as had been the attacks upon his colleagues in the Nationalist Cabinet,—especially during the futile attempt to pass the Broadening of the Streets Bill—Sir Charles had always been treated with peculiar and exceptional respect, though he would never have used methods so underhand as to foreclose upon any newspaper with whom he might have a political difference or to embarrass by official action any considerable advertiser of patent medicines whose manufacture came under the purview of his Department.

It would be an exaggeration to say that he had raised one of the minor Government posts to the level of the Foreign Office, but, at any rate, it had under his reign become almost as prominent as it had been when GHERKIN had first raised it to the rank of a principal function in the State. It was one of the great spending departments ; Repton saw to that.

Sir Charles Repton prepared to leave his house, I say, at half-past nine ; his mind was intent upon the business of the morning, which was a Board meeting of the Van Diemens. It need not yet concern the reader, it is enough for her to know (and the knowledge is consonant with Repton's character) that the Company was prepared to develop all that North-eastern littoral of the

Australian Continent for which it had obtained a charter but which no enterprise had as yet succeeded in bringing into line with the vast energies of the Empire.

Of the strategical advantages such a position can give, I need not speak. Luckily they were in the hands of patriots.

The comparatively small sum of £4,000,000 which by its charter the Company was permitted to raise would have been subscribed twenty times over in the rush for shares seven years before, and it is common knowledge that at a particular moment during which values must surely have been inflated, they reached a premium of between 800 and 900 per cent. The cool process of reflection which often follows such errors had by this time driven them if anything too low, and the original one pound share which had twice all but touched £9, had been for now many months unsaleable at a nominal price of 16/3.

There exists a sound rule of public adminstration of this country—inaugurated, I believe, by Mr. Gladstone—which forbids a Cabinet Minister to hold any public directorship at the same time as his official post, and indeed it is this rule which renders it usual for a couple of men upon opposite sides of the House to come to an arrangement whereby the one shall be Director while his colleague is in office, lest important commercial affairs should be neglected through the too rigid application of what is in principle so excellent a rule. But there had been no necessity for this arrangement in the case of so great an Imperial business as the Van Diemens: it touched too nearly the major interests of the country for its connection with a Cabinet Minister to be remarkable, and all patriotic opinion was sincerely glad when, in the preceding January, Sir Charles Repton had consented to acquire without direct purchase a few thousand shares and to take an active part in raising the fortunes of the scheme.

It was recognised upon all sides that the act was one of statesman-like self-sacrifice, and there were perhaps but two papers in London (two evening papers of large circulation but of no high standing) which so much as alluded to Sir Charles' labours in this field.

Of these one, the *Moon*, catered especially for that very considerable public which will have England mistress of the waves, which is interested in the printed results of horse-racing, which had formerly triumphantly carried at the polls the demand for protection, and which was somewhat embittered by so many years of office during which the National Party had done little more than tax the parts of motor cars, foreign unsweetened prunes, moss litter, and such small quantities of foreign sulphuric acid as are used in the manufacture of beer.

The other, the *Capon*—to give it its entire name—was of a finer stamp. All the young enthusiasts read it, and it was enormously bought for its Notes on Gardening, its caricatures, its clever headlines, and its short, downright little leaders not twenty lines long, printed, by a successful innovation, in capitals throughout, and in a red ink that showed up finely against the plain black and white of the remainder.

Both these papers had continually and violently attacked the connection of one of our few great statesmen with the last of the vast enterprises of Empire. The *Capon*, whose editor was a young man with very wild eyes and hair like a weeping willow, attacked it on principle. The *Moon*—whose proprietor was an intimate friend of Sir Charles' own—was more practical, and attacked the connection between Repton and the Company with good old personalities worthy of a more virile age.

Well, then, at this hour of half-past nine on that March day of 1915, Charles Repton rose from his breakfast. He touched the crumbs upon his waistcoat so that they

fell, and those upon his trousers also. He looked severely at the footman in the hall, who quailed a little at that glance, he rapidly put on his coat unaided, and asked briefly to see the butler.

The butler came.

"I'm out to lunch."

"Yes, Sir Charles."

"Tell Parker that if one of my letters is ever left again on the table after I have gone, I shall speak to Lady Repton."

"Yes, Sir Charles."

"The car is not to be used on any account."

"No, Sir Charles."

He turned round abruptly and went down the steps and into the street, while one of his large footmen shut the huge door ever so gently behind him.

He was a man of such character, who conducted his household so firmly, that the man, though now five months in his service, dared exchange no jest with the butler who went quietly off to his own part of the house again. It was a singular proof of what rigid domestic government can do.

From her room Maria, Lady Repton, when she was quite sure that her husband was gone, slunk downstairs. With a cunning that was now a trifle threadbare, she discovered from Parker the housekeeper, from the secretary, from the butler, by methods which she fondly believed to be indirect, what plans her husband had formed for the day. She sighed to learn that she might not have the car, for she had designed to go and see her dear old friend widow, Mrs. Hulker, formerly of Newcastle, now of Ealing, a woman of great culture and refinement and one who gave Maria, Lady Repton, nearly all her information upon books and life. Of course there was always the Tube and the Underground, but they greatly wearied this elderly lady, and it was too far to drive. She sighed a little at her husband's order.

He, meanwhile, was out in Oxford Street, and with the rapidity that distinguishes successful men, had decided not to take a motor-bus but to walk. The March day was cold and clear and breezy, and he went eastward at a happy gait. He did not need to be at his work until close upon eleven, and even that he knew to be full early for at least one colleague, the stupidest of all the Directors, a certain Bingham, upon whose late rising he counted. For the intolerable tedium of arguing against a man who invariably took the unintelligent side was one of the few things which caused Sir Charles to betray some slight shade of impatience.

The day pleased him, as indeed it pleased the greater part of London, from its fineness. He walked upon the sunny side of the street, and his smile, though restrained and somewhat sadly dignified, was the more genial from the influence of the weather. His brain during this brief exercise was not concerned, as those ignorant of our great men might imagine, with affairs of State, nor even with the choice of investments upon which he was in so short a time to determine. He was occupied rather in planning (for his power of organisation was famous) how exactly he should fit in his engagements for the day.

A Board meeting, especially if there is any chance of long argument with a late riser of exceptional stupidity, may last for an indefinite time. He gave it an hour and a half.

Then he must lunch, and that hour was earmarked for a certain foreigner who could not wholly make up his mind whether to build a certain bridge over a certain river for a certain government or no.

By a quarter to three he must be in the House of Commons to answer questions, for those which fell to his share came early upon the paper, and it was the pride of this exact and efficient man to keep no one waiting. Before four he must see the manager of a bank; the

matter was urgent, he did not wish to write or telephone. By five he must be back again in his room in the House of Commons to receive a deputation of gentlemen who would arrive from his distant constituency, and who proposed with a mixture of insistence and of fear to demand certain commercial advantages for their town at the expense of a neighbouring borough whose representative but rarely busied himself with the Great Council of the Nation.

At six he must order with particular care a dinner upon which (in his opinion) the chances of the Saltoon Development largely depended. At seven he must dress, at eight he must dine. His guests (many of whom to his knowledge would drink to excess) would certainly detain him till long after ten. He must be back in the House to vote at eleven ; for some half-hour or so after eleven he must be present to attend a short debate (or what he hoped would prove a short debate) concerning his own Department. He would be lucky if he was in bed by twelve.

Let the reader leave him there walking in Oxford Street and turn her attention to George Mulross Demaine, or rather, to Mount Popocatapetl.

CHAPTER II

IT will generally be conceded that an underground river flowing with terrific force through a region of perennial fire, must, of its nature, form a most insecure foundation for any large body of masonry; and the danger of building upon such a bottom will be the more apparent if the materials used in the construction of the edifice be insufficiently cemented through the business capacity of a contractor indifferent to the voice of conscience.

Yet such were the conditions upon the flanks of Mt. Popocatapetl when, in the Autumn of 1914, it was determined to erect on such a site the Popocatapetl Dam, for the containment of the Popocatapetl reservoir and the ultimate irrigation of El Plan.

Mt. Popocatapetl rises in a graceful cone to the height of 22,130 feet above the level of the sea. Its summit is crowned with eternal snows, while round its base, in spite of numerous earthquakes, constantly followed by the outburst of vast fountains of boiling water, cling a score of towns and villages, some with Spanish, others with unpronounceable names. To these the beneficent and lengthy rule of Gen. Porfirio Diaz has lent a political security which Nature would do well to copy,—has led the inhabitants to seek their treasure upon earth, and has bequeathed the inestimable advantage of the great Popocatapetl Dam.

I say the "inestimable advantage," for though the construction of this remarkable barrage had wholly cut off the insufficient water supply of this region, it

has brought into the neighbourhood very considerable sums of American money, an active demand for labour, and a line of railway at the terminus of which can be purchased the most enlightened newspapers of the New World. The simplest journalist,—should such a being be possessed of the means to travel in these distant regions—might also inform the residents,—should they in turn be willing to hear him patiently— that the irrigation of El Plan, though 150 miles distant from their now desiccated homes, can not but react to their advantage and create a market for their wares.

Mysterious designs of Providence! This mountain (among the noblest of volcanic phenomena) was destined to threaten with ruin a great English family, to precipitate on to the Treasury bench a young man of unassuming manners and of insufficient capacity, to shake half the finances of the world, and to determine a peerage for a man to whom such ornaments were baubles!

To appreciate by what chain of circumstances Popocatapetl's hoary head might with its nod produce so distant a consequence, it is necessary for the reader once again to fix her mind most firmly upon the truth that an underground river flowing with terrific force through a region of perennial fire, must of its nature form a most insecure foundation for any considerable body of masonry, and that the danger of building up on such a bottom will be the more apparent if the material used, etc.

. . . . . .

In the light of this knowledge, which (in common with the majority of rational beings) Ole Man Benson possessed, an investment in the stocks of a Company whose dividends depended upon the security of such an edifice might have seemed to those ill-acquainted with our modern Captains of Industry, an unpardonable folly.

It is none the less true that Ole Man Benson carried a heavy load of "Popocatapetls," naked and unashamed. He did not positively control Popocatapetls. Heaven forbid! But apart from a considerable block of which he was the actual owner, no small fraction was held by the Durango Investment Company, the majority of whose shares being the property of the Texas and Western Equalisation Syndicate, gave to Ole Man Benson in his capacity of Chief Equaliser, a distant but effective control over the second lot of Popocatapetls in question; while the very large investment of which the N.N.O. and S.L. Line had made at his command of their reserve funds in the same company, gave him in his capacity of Chief Terroriser thereof yet a third grip upon the venture.

One way and another Ole Man Benson stood in for Popocatapetls in a manner as healthy as it was unmistakable. And strangely enough, the fiercer the perennial fires and the louder the roaring of the subterranean river, the more steadily did Popocatapetls rise, the more sublimely did Wall Street urge their ascension, the more vigorously did the American investor (who was alone concerned) buy as he was told until, upon a certain day, a great Republican statesman of undoubted integrity but of perhaps too high an idealism, was announced to speak upon the great national enterprise.

Ole Man Benson loved, trusted and revered this statesman and supported him in every way; his name escapes me, but upon his decision the future of the undertaking would without question lie; and such was the bond between the two men that the politician had not hesitated to receive from the capitalist certain rough notes which had been jotted down in the office for the supreme verdict which was to be delivered to the nation.

It was to be delivered at Washington upon a certain Wednesday (the date is memorable) at the unconventional hour of ten, in order that a full report of it might reach

the foolish and the wise in New York City in ample time for its effects to be fully felt upon the markets; and *Ole Man Benson* had given instructions to sell not later than half-past three of that same fateful Wednesday.

But what, you cry (if such is your habit), what of all this in connection with the ancient houses of this land? With the Cabinet? With peerages and the rest?

Tut! Have you never heard how sensitive is the modern world to every breath of commercial news, and how all the modern world is one? Well then, I must explain:

Some two years before, in London, one GEORGE MULROSS DEMAINE had lain languishing for lack of money.

He was of good birth, and doubtless had he possessed a secure and flowing fortune, his natural diffidence would have been less pronounced, and the strange fatality by which he could hardly place his hands and feet in any position without causing some slight accident to the furniture, would have passed unnoticed, or would have been put down to good nature. But George Mulross was wholly devoid of means.

George Mulross Demaine, like so many of his rank, was related to Mary Smith.

Now Mary Smith, her pleasing, energetic person, her lively eyes and dear soul, the reader can never fully know unless she has perused or rather learned by heart, that entrancing work, "Mr. Clutterbuck's Election," in which, like a good fairy, she plumps across the scene and is perceived to be the friend, the confidant, the cousin, the sister-in-law or the aunt of at least three-quarters of what counts in England.

She will not feel, I say, unless she has made that work her Bible, how from St. James's Place Mary Smith blessed Society with her jolly little hands, and indulged in the companionship of characters as varied as the Peabody Yid and Victoria Mosel.

What a woman! Her little shooting-box in Scotland! Her place in the West Country! The country house which she so rarely visited in the Midlands, but which she lent in the freest manner! Her vivacity, her charm, her go, her scraps of French—her inheritance from her late husband, himself an American and Smith, as I need hardly say, by name!

The reader unacquainted with the Work which I refer her to, must further have introduced to her at the proper place the notable figure of cousin William Bailey, at what an expense of repetition upon my part I need hardly say. He also was of the gang; he also had been elected of the people; but violent eccentricities now kept him apart from his true world. Thus he professed a vast interest in Jews, making them out to be the secret masters of England. How far that fanaticism was sincere, he could not himself have told you. It diverted him hugely to discover mares' nests of every kind; he was never happier than when he was tracking the relationship between governing families or the connection of some spotless politician with a spotted financial adventure. There was but one excuse for his manias, that he remained, through the most ardent pursuit of them, a genial cynic. We shall meet him again.

Mary Smith, then, was related to all of them and they were all related to each other, and in their relationship there was friendship also, and they governed England and the taxes bore them on.

That the Leader of the Opposition should be Mary Smith's close friend goes without saying; much closer and dearer to her was her other cousin, the young and popular Prime Minister, to his friends Dolly, to the world a more dignified name, who suffered slightly from his left lung. He had attained his high position before his fiftieth year was closed. For over four years he had conducted with consummate skill the fortunes of the Nationalist Party, and was at that very moment

when Popocatapetl nursed so sullenly its internal rage, piloting in distant Westminster the Broadening of the Streets Bill through an excited session of Parliament.

But of all her relatives, near or distant, of all the friends whom she called by their Christian name, not the Chancellor of the Exchequer, not the First Sea Lord, not the six chief members of the front Opposition bench, not the eight or nine disappointed men with corner seats, not the score or so of great financiers whom she honoured at her board,—not the Secretary of State for the Colonies (a diminished post since the Sarawatta business),—not the young and popular Prime Minister himself, who suffered slightly from the left lung,—was quite so dear to her as that sort of nephew, George Mulross Demaine.

The relationship was distant, and it was less on account of the ties of blood than by reason of the strong friendship that had always existed between his father and herself that Mary Smith first befriended the lad as she had already befriended so many others. For Demaine's father, though what the world would call a failure and even for many years separated from his wife, had always exercised a peculiar charm over his acquaintance.

Opinion had been sharply divided upon several episodes of his life, so sharply that towards the close of it he preferred to live abroad, and George's boyhood had been passed in the most uneasy of experiences, now with his father in Ireland, now with his mother in the neighbourhood of Constantinople, and occasionally under the roof of Mary Smith during her short married life.

She had grown to do for him what she would not do for another—for Charlie Fitzgerald for instance,—for he was not a scatterbrain nor one to get rid of money with nothing to show for it. He was simply a quiet, unostentatious English lad, a little awkward (as we know) with his hands and feet but hiding a heart of gold, and destined to inherit nothing. He was not yet

of age when his mother died, and during the first years of his manhood he passed more and more time under the roof of this kindly and powerful woman who had determined that the misfortunes or faults of his parents should not be visited upon him.

She took him everywhere, she kept him in pocket money and, most important of all, two years ago she had arranged his marriage.

The moment was opportune: he was twenty-five, he had lost his father, he was penniless, the title of Grinstead into which he would certainly come was distant and was unprovided for. He had not chosen, or rather had not been given, the opportunity of entering, the army, but there had been just enough bungling about that to make him miss the university also. He was so unfitted for diplomacy that even William Bailey, who was accustomed to recommend for that profession the least vivacious of his young friends, shook his head when it was proposed, and after a very short experience in Paris he was withdrawn from it.

No profession naturally proposed itself to a man of his talents, and he had not the initiative to live as a free lance. His marriage, therefore, was one of these providential things which seemed to fit almost too exactly into the general scheme of life to be true. He met his wife when Mary Smith (after making all her inquiries at the Petheringtons') had caught and branded that heiress: and the wife so branded was Sudie Benson, the daughter of so wealthy an American as made the traffic of London not infrequently halt for his convenience, and who rather more than two years before my story bursts open, had seen fit to bring the radiant girl to London.

The two were forcibly introduced—I mean the boy and the girl—they understood from the first what their destiny was to be. She could find no fault in the society which swam round her and to which such a marriage

would introduce her activities; he saw no drawback to the alliance save one or two mannerisms in his prospective father-in-law, which time might modify—or on the other hand, might not.

Ole Man Benson, to give him once more the name by which he was known and hated in another sphere, from the first ten thousand* which by the age of forty-three he had laboriously accumulated in shredded cod-fish, had dealt not with things, as do lesser men, but with figures. He had gone boldly forward like a young Napolean, using, it must be remembered, not only the money of others but very often his own as well.

He had been born of Scotch-Irish parents, probably of the name of Benson, and certainly married in the First Baptist Church of Cincinnati not quite three-quarters of a century ago. He was the youngest child of a numerous family, and was baptised or named after the poet Theocritus, with a second or middle name of Chepstow, which in his signature he commonly reduced to its initial letter.

Theocritus C. Benson, now familiar to the whole Anglo-Saxon race of every colour and clime, was of that type always rare but now, though rare, conspicuous, which can so organise and direct the acts of others as to bring order out of chaos, chaos out of order, and alternately accumulate and disperse fortunes hitherto unprecedented in the history of the world.

He was accustomed (in the interviews which he was proud to grant to the newspapers of England, America and the Colonies) to describe his great position to unwearied industry and to an abhorrence of all excess (notably in the consumption of fermented liquors) and particularly of the horrid practice of gambling. His puritan upbringing, which had taught him to look upon cards as the Devil's picture-book, and upon racing as akin to the drama in its spiritual blight, was, he would

* Dollars, not pounds.

constantly assert, the key to all that he had done since he left his father's home. But in this manly self-judgment the Hon. Mr. Benson did himself an injustice. These high qualities are to be discovered in many million of his fellow-citizens, and he might as well have pointed, as sometimes he did point with pride, to the number of his Lodge, or to his ignorance of foreign languages as the causes of his repeated triumphs.

There was more: to his hatred of hazard and to his stern sense of duty and unbending industry, he added something of that daring which has made for the greatness of the blood in all its adventures Overseas, and for no branch more than for the Scotch-Irish.

He would boldly advance sums in blind confidence of the future, the mere total of which would have appalled a lesser man, and he would as boldly withdraw them to the ruin of prosperous concerns, where another would have been content to let production take its own course. And this fine command of cash and of credit which he used as a General uses an army, had in it something of personal courage; for towards the latter part of his life, when he had come to control a vast private fortune, it was imperative that in many a bold conception he himself should stand to lose or gain.

At the moment when his only daughter left her happy Belgian convent to be presented at the Court of St. James, he was, though at the height of his fortunes, a lonely and to some extent an embittered man.

His wife had married another: their only child he had not seen for three years, and though he knew that her robust common sense would stand against the religious environment of the gentle nuns who had been entrusted with her upbringing, yet he could not but feel that she had passed the most formative years of her life in an alien air, and under influences quite other than those of the Ohio Valley.

He had therefore determined to decline numerous and

advantageous offers and to be present himself in London during the season which saw her introduction to the world, and there, in spite of his unfamiliarity with English ways, he soon appreciated the central position of Mary Smith whose late husband indeed he had come across a quarter of a century before when he was freezing the Topekas off the Pit.

Theocritus C. Benson had seen young Demaine and was contented; he was also naturally anxious to come across old Lord Grinstead if possible, that he might estimate for himself how long his daughter might have to wait for her title. Indeed he would not allow the marriage to take place until the old man had been pointed out to him, shrivelled almost to nothingness and pulled with extreme caution and deliberation in a bath-chair through the private gardens of Bayton House.

Had he known that the figure thus exhibited to him so far from being that of the aged peer was but the carcase of a ruined dependant it would perhaps have done little to alter his decision, for though Lord Grinstead was of gigantic stature, with purple face and thunderous voice, yet his habit of gross and excessive drinking gave him a tenure of life at least as precarious as that of the enfeebled figure upon which the financier had gazed; and what is more, Lord Grinstead, though an execrable horseman, had suddenly begun to hunt upon hired mounts with a recklessness and tenacity which, if from that cause alone, should speedily ensure a violent death.

When all was happily settled, when Demaine had been given away by his principal creditor, and Sudie by her upright and handsome old father, when the last of the wedding gifts had been exchanged at the usual discount and the young couple had gone off to Honiton Castle which had been lent them for £2000 during the honeymoon, another aspect of life had to be considered.

A point upon which Mary Smith had done her best and failed was the settlements—£1500 a year to stand

between his child and starvation or worse, Theocritus was willing to determine. It was the sum he had himself named before the first negotiations were begun; but as they proceeded he refused to change it by one penny, and at last the discussion was abandoned in despair. All the young people might need they should have —she was his only child, they could trust him to be more than generous. Capital sums when they were required for anything but direct investment, should be always at their disposal, and the half or more than the half of his enormous income should be ready to their call; but he resolutely retained to himself the right to control the management of all save the infinitesimal sum which was to stand between Sudie and her husband's tyranny, or the world's harshness.

Mary Smith's veiled threats and open flattery were alike useless. She capitulated, told the young woman to earmark her tiny allowance for journeys, and gained from Theocritus Chepstow only this:—that he would buy a freehold for them, build and furnish it. Theocritus was on like a bird; and the lovely little lodge which London now knows as Demaine House, with its curious formal gardens, odd Dutch stables and Grecian weathercock on the site of the old mews in what is now Benson Street, is the proof that he kept his promise.

For a year Ole Man Benson had not only kept his promise in the way of building and furnishing for the young people: he had done more. He had floated them upon London with all the revenue that could be reserved from the new venture upon which he designed to double the colossal sums which directly or indirectly stood to his name, and every penny that he could spare from his first early purchases of Popocatapetls went into the status and future social position of his daughter. Now, after two years, Popocatapetl Dam was finished and yet greater things lay before them.

Demaine was put into Parliament by a majority

comparable only to the financial advantages which had secured it. His birth, her voice and its timbre, gathered into Demaine House all that so small a Great House could hold.

So things had stood to within a week of the March day upon which we saw that very different man, Charles Repton, walking into the City of London.

But from the name of Charles Repton let me rapidly slew off the sombre pyramid of that peak in the neighbourhood of Darien and recall the caprice of Popocatapetl upon which so much was to depend.

It was a Wednesday in that March of 1915 that the Statesman was to speak in Washington at ten: (for two years Demaine House had thriven, it slept that Tuesday night unconscious of its fate). It was for the Wednesday at 3.30 that the order to sell stood in Ole Man Benson's name. . . Well . . .

CHAPTER III

LATE upon that Tuesday night Ole Man Benson boarded the Louis XV. Rosewood Express de Luxe as it steamed out of the Chicago Depot of the M.N. & C.: he was off to his mountain property in Idaho, and in the privacy of his section, Ole Man Benson slept.

Not so the forces of Nature, so often destructive of the schemes of pigmy man!

An appalling convulsion altogether exceeding anything heard or dreamt of since the beginning of time, totally destroyed the Popocatapetelian landscape in the small hours of that same morning; and as, a thousand miles to the north, the Louis XV. Rosewood Express de Luxe rolled in a terrific manner upon its insufficient rock ballast, the subterranean river, the perennial fires and the unscrupulously erected edifice of the great dam, shot aloft in a vast confusion and were replaced by a chasm some quarter of a mile in breadth and of a depth unfathomable to mortal plummets. It was March; March 1915. In Iowa in March it snows. The locomotive and two of the cars attacked to the Louis XV. Rosewood Express de Luxe were buried a little beyond Blucher in a drift of snow the height and dimensions of which exceeded the experience of the oldest settler in that charming prairie town. *The same storm which had caused the misadventure had broken the wires for many miles around.*

Ole Man Benson awoke, therefore, to a scene of great discomfort, but upon such a date and with a prospect of

so considerable an increase of fortune awaiting him upon that very day, he was the gayest of the company, and in spite of his years he shovelled away with the best of them, a-splendid-type-of-Anglo-Saxon-manhood.

By one o'clock that noon the telegraph at last was working, and the first messages came through to the little depot; they concerned a riot in a local home for paralytics. Next, before two, news was conveyed of an outbreak of religious mania in the town of Omaha. It was not till a late hour in the evening that Ole Man Benson, waiting anxiously for the report of the great speech, heard the earliest tidings of the practical joke which Providence—in spite of Gen. Porfirio Diaz' equable and masterly rule—had played him in the distant tropics.

The same rapidity of thought which had enabled Theocritus to accumulate his vast fortune enabled him in that moment to perceive that he was ruined. Not indeed necessarily for ever,—he had known such things before—but at any rate in a manner sufficiently hefty to produce his immediate collapse.

When, next morning, he could bring himself to read the papers, the disaster appeared before him in its exact proportions and tremendous scale.

That speech, that statesmanlike speech, had never been delivered—and for the best of reasons: Popocatapetl had unbosomed first! In the wild fall of prices nothing had done more to ruin the market than the heavy selling of agents acting on account of Theocritus C. Benson. There were dozens within the roaring walls of the building in Wall Street, thousands in the anxious streets without, who saw in the Benson selling yet another move of diabolical cunning proceeding from that Napoleonic brain. His agents had done their work thoroughly and well. They had anticipated his orders with such promptitude that no stick was left unsaleable upon their hands, and when, before the end of that

black day, Popocatapetls were offering at the cost of haulage, they could proudly say that every interest of their client's in the ruined concern had been disposed of. And Theocritus C. Benson, henceforward known as the Earthquake King, was left with no unsaleable paper upon his hands, but on the contrary with a solid cash result equivalent to at least three cents on the dollar of his yesterday's fortune. This it is to be faithfully served in the intricacies of modern speculation!

A truce to Ole Man Benson! If I have introduced his wretched commercial adventures at such length it is but to explain the portentous effect which they had upon the fortunes of one British statesman.

Far off in London (Eng.) George Mulross Demaine saw nothing in his morning newspaper but the news (to him a serious matter) that Pink Eye was scratched for the Grand National. His wife, whom her father had shielded from the vulgar atmosphere of commerce, noted indeed the news from the Western Hemisphere and was for a passing moment concerned; but Ole Man Benson did not telegraph, for there were no flies upon him, nor did Ole Man Benson even write, and for the same entomological reason.

Oh! no. Ole Man Benson proceeded to New York, had certain interviews with certain people, took certain drugs, went through a certain cure, laid as he hoped the foundations of yet another scheme, and not until 30th of March, a full week after the matter I have described, did Theocritus dictate a brief note to his daughter, which I will here transcribe:

(If not delivered, please return within three days to Theocritus C. Benson,)

"2909 KANAKA BUILDING
NEW YORK CITY
30/3/'15.

Coming across on Potassic. Depart 4th—probable arrival Plymouth 11th. Shall cable.

(Signed) FATHER."

With true business instinct the great organiser dispatched the cable upon the 4th of April, so that his daughter received upon the evening of the same day in her London house the reassuring word "eleventh," which her reception of the letter a few days later easily enabled her to comprehend; and on 11th of April, sure enough, Ole Man Benson in a grave and sober manner embraced his daughter on the landing-stage at Plymouth. George Mulross Demaine was also there, standing a little behind the affectionate group, clothed in a large green ulster and a cap of the same cloth and colour with an enormous peak.

They got into the train together and all the way up to London the master of empty millions said nothing.

As they were driving to Demaine House he spoke: "Any o' your folk to supper?" he said.

His daughter with filial gaiety assured him that she had waited his orders, to which he replied, "Good girl Sudie."

During the meal he was as silent as he had been upon the journey, and at the end of it he gave his son-in-law to understand that he desired to talk business with his daughter and preferred to be alone with her: and George Mulross went out, taking his wine with him, for his wife's father drank none, but only Toxine.

The message Ole Man Benson had to deliver to Sudie was simple enough: there would, for he could not say how long, be no more money forthcoming. He hoped the position might be retrieved; he was confident it would be retrieved before the Fall, by Thanksgiving at latest. Till then, nit!

Sudie had all her father's readiness; she pointed out to him at once that under the conditions of English politics the total cessation of an income the source of which was familiar to her husband's friends, would at once affect her father's credit in future transactions, and clearly showed that no investment could be more

to his advantage than the placing of sums at her disposal for the proper up-keep of his daughter's position in the society of London.

To this powerful argument Theocritus immediately replied that those who looked for hens' teeth were liable to be stung; that cigars containing explosive matter had been offered him too frequently in the past for him now to entertain the thought of consuming them; and that when he was bulling London he would advise. By which parables he intended to, and did, convey to his daughter his fixed conclusion that it was up to her to bear futures: and lest she should have failed wholly to seize his point, he told her briefly and in the plainest terms that whatever rocks were going were wanted—badly—to sling at something with more dough in it than Mayfair.

With that their brief discourse was ended.

This little conversation over, Demaine was given to understand that he might re-enter the room. He was a little shy in doing so, for interviews of this sort usually meant some new gift or subsidy, but it was shyness of a pleasant sort, and he had little doubt that he should hear in a moment the extent or at least the nature of the new bounty which this young household was to receive. He was therefore only puzzled by the novelty of phrasing when his father-in-law, looking at him in a manner rather humorous than severe, remarked:

"Well, I've stacked it up with Sudie, and she may stack it up with you." Then in a kinder tone, he added: "You catch?"

"Yes, sir," said George untruthfully.

"Why then, 'nuff's said," concluded the Captain of Industry, and very thoughtfully he picked his teeth with a long fine silver point which he habitually carried in his waistcoat for that purpose of the toilet. "It's no call ter last long," he muttered half to himself and half to the bewildered Demaine; "anyhow the pump's

sucking ; and there's no more oil,"—to elucidate which somewhat cryptic phrase Sudie begged her husband not to stand gaping there like a booby, but to sit down and understand as much of it as he could.

Whereupon in the clearest possible language, punctuated by her father's decisive and approving nods, she translated into older idioms exactly what had happened, and exactly what it meant. They were worth just £1500 a year between them from that day onwards for—well, till there was a change.

It was not tact but nervousness that prevented George at the end of this dreadful passage from suggesting that his father-in-law could do again what he had done before, that the strain was temporary, and that he for his part hoped for the best ; but his wife, who was by this time fairly well accustomed to follow his thought, was careful to point out that whatever the future might do for them, the present was dirt black, and the present meant at least two years.

" At least two years ? " (to her father).

To which her father very simply and plainly answered her : " Yep."

There was much of the splendid blood of Theocritus in Sudie ; indeed it is often observed that the genius of the father will descend to the daughter—and *vise versa*.

The very next sentence, therefore, with which Sudie prodded her disconsolate spouse, was a demand for a list of those who might be ready to take Demaine House, to take it at once, to take it furnished, to take it high, to take it by the year, and not for the season, and, when they had taken it, to *pay*.

Demaine immediately suggested the name of such of his acquaintance as might most desire to occupy such a position in London, and were also least able to do so, but he was careful to add after each name, some such remark as " But of course they won't do," or " but

I don't think he can afford it,"—until his father-in-law in a pardonable lassitude went out.

"The best thing you can do," said his wife with renewed decision when they were alone, "is to get up right here and go round to Mary's." For it was a notable circumstance in Sudie's relations with Mrs. Smith that while that lady gave *her* her full title, *she* would invariably allude to Mrs. Smith by the more affectionate medium of the Christian name.

Demaine assented. He found his father-in-law at the door; they went out together into the night, and when he had timidly admitted that he was going South towards St. James's, the financier with rapid decision announced that he was going North towards Marylebone,—and they parted.

Mary Smith was not in. It was only eleven and the theatre detained her. George waited. He took counsel from several valuable pictures, was careful to touch and handle nothing upon her tables (for he knew that she detested an accident and with almost-canine-sagacity could invariably detect his interference), and stood, not at ease.

She came in at twelve; she brought a party with her, and she insisted upon supper. It was one before she could talk to him alone, and she talked to him until two.

The first thing she did was to tell him that he could not let his house that season and that he must make up his mind to it. The second was to discover what balance there was at the bank—and to hear that it was pitifully small. The third was to offer him a short loan that would carry him over at least a few weeks of necessary expense, and the fourth to tell him that, not upon the morrow but upon the day after, she would have decided.

Meanwhile he must post a letter for her.

She sat down and wrote at once to William Bailey.

"When you get outside, George," she said as she gave

him the letter, "you will see a very large pillar box. It is much larger than most pillar boxes; it has two slits in it instead of one. Do you follow me?"

"Yes," he said humbly.

"You will not put this letter in your pocket, George," she went on firmly and kindly, as certain practitioners do when they propose to hypnotise their patients. "You will carry it in front of you like this." She put it into his right hand, crooked his arm, held his wrist upright, so that his eyes could not help falling upon the missive. "The moment you get outside you will put it in the *right*-hand slit of the pillar box, won't you?"

He said "yes" again, as humbly as before. And as he went out he did all that she had asked him, though to make the matter more sure she watched for a moment from the window.

When William Bailey received the letter next morning he was in the best of moods. For one thing he was going to leave London for three weeks,—a prospect that always delighted him. For another he was going to do some sea fishing, a sport of which he was passionately fond. For a third, an Austrian money-lender and a baron at that, had shot himself—it had of course been kept out of the English papers, but he had read all the details in one of the anti-semitic rags which are the disgrace of Vienna, and his spirits had risen, buoyant at the news. Finally, and what was of perhaps most importance for an eccentric and middle-aged celibate, the house which he had hired for a month he knew exactly suited him. It was the house of Merry, the architect, and stood just so far from Parham Town as would give him the isolation he adored, yet just so near to Parham Harbour as would put him in touch with the sea.

For all these reasons he read Mary Smith's little note in great gaiety of heart, and in a mood in which men of influence are willing to do what they can for their kind.

Like many men of wealth and ability whom oppor-

tunity has made eccentric, William Bailey could not bear to handle the pen. He hesitated for some moments between the extreme boredom of writing and the tantalising business of the telephone, decided in favour of the former, wrote on a form—

"Get Dolly to make room for him.
(Signed) BILL."—

and sent the message out to be telegraphed to his cousin Mary Smith, receiving it, received with it a great light.

It was not always easy for her to follow the changes that took place in political appointments, but she was certain of *this*, that the present administration contained more unfamiliar names than she cared to think of, and that there *must* be room in such a crowd for a man of poor George's standing.

Now from the moment that such thoughts as these entered Mary Smith's head about a man's appointment that man was safe: poor George's future was therefore ultimately secure. But there was no time to lose. He must get on to the front bench, and he must get there with a salary, and the salary must be sufficient, and the promotion must be rapid. She remembered that Dolly would be at the Petheringtons' that evening, and she determined to be there too. She hoped and prayed that nothing would bring George, though since George was everywhere the chances were against her prayer being answered.

For the moment she thought of warning him not to come, then, remembering certain indiscretions of his in the past, she thought it best to say nothing, but to trust to chance.

CHAPTER IV

CHARLES REPTON, manifold as were his financial interests, knew nothing of Popocatapetls, and cared less.

The manner in which his life was to be influenced by that very distant cataclysm was hidden from him ; as (for that matter) it would be hidden from the reader also had not this book been most boldly published.

Yet another thing the full import of which may escape the reader, is the fact that Sir Charles Repton was extremely tender just behind the ears ; but for this the reader herself alone and not the author is to blame, for if the reader had any knowledge of Caryll's Ganglia she would have guessed at twenty things. But no matter : Caryll's Ganglia and their effect upon self-control very much interrupt the chain of those absorbing adventures which, if she will continue, the reader will presently peruse.

Anyhow, those regions of the head which lie behind either ear were for some reason or other very tender, large, sensitive to pressure, and in a way abnormal in Sir Charles Repton.

When, therefore, somewhere about the corner of Tottenham Court Road (on that March day on which we left him walking to his Board meeting), his hat blew off : when he had run after it : when in doing so he had ruffled his fine crop of white hair ; and when, to have it all set right, he had gone into a second-rate barber's, it may well be imagined that he gave the man who served him minute instructions that the head rest upon the

back of the chair should be made comfortable—and so it was. And on to it Sir Charles Repton leant gingerly the head upon whose clear action depended the future fortunes of Van Diemens.

The man in brushing his hair with an apparatus of singular power, turned the monologue on to the common-places of the moment, which included the bestiality of the Government and the abhorrent nature of the Italian people, of whom at that particular moment in 1915 the people of London stood in abject terror.

Whether it was the pressure of the violent rotating brush or some looseness in the screw that held the support behind him, with a shock and a clang that support slipped and Sir Charles Repton's head came smartly down, first through nothingness and then on to two iron nuts which exactly corresponded to those processes of the skull just behind either ear, in which, as I have taken pains to remark, he was peculiarly sensitive: for they were largely developed in him and nourished it would seem by an unusual supply of blood.

Sharp as was the pain, Charles Repton controlled himself, listened to the explanations and apologies of the barber, and submitted himself again to the grooming for which he had entered.

When he went out again into the street he had almost forgotten the accident. The two places where his head had been struck swelled slightly, and he touched them now and again, but they soon passed from his mind within ten minutes they were no longer painful; yet was there set up in them from that moment, an irritation which was to have no inconsiderable consequence.

He went on into the City, ordered one or two things which he had set down in his memorandum before starting looked in at a City Club where he knew one or two items of news were awaiting him, and slowly betook himself to the offices of the Van Diemens Company. He had thoroughly planned out the scheme of that morning's

work; it needed no recapitulation in his mind, yet as his habit was, just before opening the door of the Board Room, in the few seconds of going up the stairs, he briefly presented his scheme of tactics to his own mind.

The Directors must ask the shareholders for fresh capital; a nominal million, an increase of 25 per cent. upon the value of the shares at par. That was the first point.

The second point was the object for which this levy should nominally be demanded. On that also he had made up his mind. Paton had quite unconsciously suggested to him the master idea: a little belt of unravelled and unknown country (locally known as the 'Out and Out") wherein the degraded Kawangas—so Paton had told him, and after all Paton had been there—held their orgies in Mutchi-time, alone separated Perks' Bay from the Straits, and the long detour which all traffic must now make between the coaling station and the high road to the East, could be cut off by a line crossing that region. Paton had assured him with immense enthusiasm that such a line would give its possessor the strategic key to the gate of everything East of the Bay of Bengal, and, what was more important in Sir Charles' eyes than Paton's own opinion, a vast mass of gentlemen in the suburbs of London and perhaps five-sixths of the journalists in Fleet Street, were ready to rally to the idea. It had been well preached and well dinned in.

These two points were clear: they must ask for a million and they must ask it for the purpose of building a railway that would at last ensure the Empire against the nightmare of foreign rivals.

There was a third point. The shareholders would not or could not subscribe a million but that was easily turned. They should be asked for no more than 200,000, —a shilling a share—in cash down, "the remainder to be paid," etc. etc.

Had not Sir Charles possessed an iron control of his face, the strong set smile which he wore as he entered the Board Room would have broadened at the recollection of that last detail. On the other hand, had he not possessed such self-control some movement of annoyance might have escaped him to discover present at the table, among his other colleagues, the late-rising and impervious Bingham. The sight was sufficient to exasperate a man of less balance. The hour had been carefully chosen to avoid such an accident, and that accident meant perhaps another half-hour or more of close argument and of subtle effort.

For his colleague Bingham added to a native idiocy of solid texture and formidable dimensions, the experience of extensive travel; and he was in particular well acquainted with the district with regard to which the Board must that day make its decision. It was certain, therefore, that his fellow-Directors would listen to him with peculiar respect, not only on account of his stupidity which necessarily commanded a certain attention, but also on account of his intimacy with plain matters of fact: he had been upon the spot: he was the man who knew.

It was just as Repton had feared. Business that might have been done in a quarter of an hour and a decision which contained no more than the issue of pieces of paper was turned into a long practical discussion by the intolerable ponderance of Bingham, who would wait until every one had had his say, and then would bring in some dreadful little technical point about a marsh, a rainy season or a fly; he was careful to pepper his conversation with local terms a hundred times more remote than the Kawanga and Mutchi-time; in every conceivable manner he put his spoke into the wheels of business.

So considerable was the effect produced by the redoubtable Bingham at that table that, were Cæsarism

common political theory in elderly men, the whole conduct of Van Diemens would for the future have been out into his hands. Luckily for the Company its forms were not so democratic.

Charles Repton waited patiently. When he spoke his point was as simple as falling off a log: what was wanted was not a railway in itself, it was a new issue of capital. He was profoundly indifferent what label should be tied on to that issue, so long as it was a label good enough to get the original shareholders to come in. The public would never come in as things were: its pusillanimity was increased by the fact that the Company had been in existence for now eleven years and had hitherto failed to pay a dividend of any kind. After some thought he had decided, in company with one or two others upon the Board, that a railway through a certain district of the concession, locally known as "The Out and Out," and remarkable for the fact that no white man had yet visited it, would be the best attraction he could offer. He was prepared to show by the aid of maps upon which should be marked all favourable things, that a line driven through this district would unite with the world two provinces teeming with inexhaustible wealth, of a heavenly climate, and hitherto by the mere accident of the Out and Out belt, cut off from the longing embraces of commerce. More; he could show that this single line of railway would bestow upon his beloved country so vast a strategic superiority over all other nations as would ensure her immediate success in any campaign, no matter what the quality of the troops she might employ. To this he added the attractions of touring in the tropics and the allurements of big game for those wealthy gentlemen whom he designed in the new prospectus to term Shikaris.

With the new capital subscribed and long before the line was surveyed, there was little doubt that the shares which had fallen from over £9 to the comparatively low

quotation—but oh! not price—of 16/3 (at which quotation he had first consented to tender his services to the Company) would rise to certainly over £1, perhaps to nearer £2, and what was more to the point they would be readily saleable. He was prepared in that event to transfer his property in them to others, a course which he sincerely hoped his fellow-shareholders would also follow, though of course he would not take it upon himself to advise any one of them.

Bingham, like the practical man he was, pinned himself to the railway. He *knew* the Out and Out; not that he'd ever been there,—no white man had,—but he had talked to several of the Kawanga in Mutchi-time, and he shook his head despondently. There was one continuous line of precipice 3000 feet deep; there was a river which was now a stream five miles broad, now a marsh and now again dry,—sometimes for years on end. There was a dense mass of forest; there was that much more difficult thing, a belt of shifting sand dunes; there were nearly 300 miles without water through these. He was prepared to speak all day upon the difficulties of building a railway which none but the least intelligent had ever designed to build.

Sir Charles Repton could ride himself on the curb, and more than anything else this mastery had given him his present great position; but that day he had to exercise his will to the full, and in that exercise he felt slight twinges behind the ear where the barber's rest had struck him. It was all he could do to prevent himself from drumming on the table or from making those interruptions which only serve as fuel to the slow criticisms of the dull.

At last—and heaven knows with what subtlety and patience—he conquered. There was a vote (a thing he had wished to avoid), but he carried it by two; and it was agreed that the issue of new capital should be made, that a General Meeting of the shareholders should be called for Tuesday the 2nd of June, and that he, Repton,

should have the task of laying the scheme before them. The new prospectus, which he had already drafted, was passed round and with a very few emendations accepted. Then, after as heavy a bit of work as had ever been undertaken in the way of persuasion, the principal brain in that company was at last free for other things.

It was half-past one. He had just time to meet and to convince yet another fool upon another matter: the foreigner acting as agent for his Government, on the matter of the bridge: a bridge which the Foreign Government might or might not build, and, if they built, might or might not order from a firm which Repton had reason to befriend. Repton must lunch with that foreigner: he must persuade him to build: he must get the order—then he must be in his place in the House in time for questions.

The foreigner was as wax in his hands: not as good warm wax, adulterated wax, candle wax, but rather as beeswax, very ancient and hard. It was a full hour before that wax was pliable, but once again the unceasing, managed, strict watchfulness, the set face which had always in it something stern but never anything aggressive, the balance of judgment, conquered. Down to the smallest detail of that conversation Repton was the artist, his host at the lunch was the public, accepting and gradually convinced, and the bridge was ordered for the Foreign Government, though it was a useless bridge leading from nowhere to nowhere, and though it could have been built much more solidly and much better by the people of the place than by the English firm.

Then Repton went on to the House of Commons, and there, as in every duty of the day, the weight of his character told.

The questions were slight, there were not half a dozen that concerned his Department, but he answered them all with that curious restraint of tone which somehow made it difficult to cross-examine his Department. And

he faced the House with such a poise and expression that one almost wondered, as one looked at him, upon which side he was sitting, or whether indeed the mere game of In's and Out's entered into his brain at all.

He seemed to be quite above the divisions of party. He seemed a sort of Ambassador from the permanent officials and to carry into the House of Commons an atmosphere at once judicial and experienced which no one could resist. When he had first accepted the Wardenship of the Court of Dowry it had been wondered that he should take so secondary a post. Now, after these four years, it was rather wondered why no one had seen till then the possibilities that lay in the position.

After that typical and decisive day, Repton, for more than a month, refrained from debate.

He was ever in his seat on those two days in each week when it was his business to answer questions: he never let his understrapper appear for him; for one full fortnight he was permanently in attendance, watching the fortunes before a select committee of a certain Bill, for which the public cared nothing but which he knew might change in a very important particular the public fortune—but in general he seemed to be in retirement. He was planning hard.

A mixture of Imperial sentiment and personal pride urged him to put Van Diemens on their legs, and all April, all through the Easter Recess, he remained in London working. He worked right on into May; for the first week after Parliament met again he was seen but little; one thing only troubled him, that at long intervals—sometimes as long as ten days, an uneasy twinge behind the ears, the result of that little half-forgotten accident, incommoded him. These twinges came a trifle more frequently as May advanced. After the last of them he had felt a little dazed—no more. And still he worked and worked, holding twenty reins in his hands.

Before the end of May the fruit of all this labour began to appear. Camptons were reconstructed, arbitration had been forced upon the Docks combination in the North just in time to prevent a wholesale transference of shipping abroad, and more important than all, perhaps, there had begun to crop up in the papers here, there, and everywhere, the mention—and the flattering mention—of Van Diemens, and the wealthy were alr ady familiar with the conception of a certain railway in the land which was under the Van Diemens charter.

The wealthy, but as yet only the wealthy; it is as fatal to be too early as to be too late, and that brain which knew how to drive and compel, had also known so well how to restrain, that the shares still remained unsaleable with the meaningless quotation of sixteen shillings and a few fluctuating pence still attached to them in the market lists.

So Repton stood in the middle of May, 1915, when he became aware that an obscure member (obscure at least in the House of Commons—and Repton noticed little of, and cared nothing for, the merely luxurious world of London), an aristocrat of sorts, one of the *Demaine*,—George Demaine it seemed, was being talked about. He was being pushed somehow. Repton hardly heeded so commonplace a phenomenon, save perhaps to wonder what job was on:—he continued to push Van Diemens.

CHAPTER V.

THE Petheringtons' house, to which Mary Smith drove on the evening of 12th of April, under the two pretty little electric lights of her car, one for either side of her face, was one of a hundred similar London houses, a huge brown cube in the middle of Grosvenor Square.

It was no longer called Petherington House; it had once again regained its more familiar appellation of No. 89, under which it had been famous for the complete lack of entertainment of any sort which had distinguished the short session of 1912. Then old Hooker had died, the changes in the Cabinet had come, Hooker's wife had married the Bishop and also died immediately, and finally the Petheringtons had taken the place, foolishly called it by their own title for a few months, and finding it unknown to cabmen and to their friends' chauffeurs also under this appellation, they slowly reverted to the old name.

If hospitality is a fault when pushed to an extreme, the Petheringtons exhibited that fault. But so excellent were their arrangements—for business will out even in the smallest details of domestic life—that no one suffered in the crush, and that it was perfectly easy in the time a guest ordinarily allowed himself for the function, to go up the stairs and down again, though perhaps too much time was wasted at the necessarily narrow entrance where men must seek their hats and coats.

The movement of Society in this particular case was

rendered the more facile by the emptiness of the hall, from which everything had been taken except the Great Stuffed Bear which had been shot by the servant of a trapper who had sold it to the correspondent of the furrier of Lady Petherington, and which now stood holding a tray, with an expression of extreme ferocity, and labelled "The Caucasus, 17th June, 1910,"—for in those mountains Mr. Petherington—as he then was—had travelled.

Mary Smith was not disappointed. Mooning aimlessly about the crowded rooms above, in an atmosphere surcharged with mauve Moravian music—the loudest of its kind—shuffled the anxious and slightly bowed form of Dolly, the young and popular Prime Minister.

A foreigner might have thought him to have few friends, so slowly did he proceed and with so curious a gaze from one group to another, seeming half stunned by the vigour of the band and fascinated by the vigorous contortions of Mr. Arthur Worth who conducted it for all he was—I mean with his utmost capacity of gesture and expression. That foreigner would have suffered an illusion. The Prime Minister was perfectly well known in face and figure to every one in that room, and there were few who did not hope for some advantage from his presence, but fewer, far fewer still, who attempted to obtain it. I must of course except Professor Kahn.

Dolly knew his Mary Smith, and resigned himself to suffer. She had not come there that night for nothing. She got up to him within half a minute of the view, and found him with peculiar dexterity through a maze of wealthy people. She quietly took him away, and sat him in a large chair that stood in a remote recess, where the light was subdued; she took advantage of a deafening crash in the music to which its previous succeesses were child's play, and shouted:

"When are you going to have your next move?"

The Prime Minister implored her not to talk shop. Then somewhat inconsequently he added, weakening: "Why do you want to know?"

The music was now whining and part of it was taking breath for another charge. It was therefore in quite a low but exceedingly business-like tone that Mary Smith remarked:

"Because I want you to do something for Dimmy."

The name suggested to the Prime Minister one of twenty little jobs; he thought of a jolly little one in Ireland. But she added: "You know what has happened?"

He didn't.

She told him briefly: Ole Man Benson was broke.

The Prime Minister remembered the explosion of Popocatapetl: he had vaguely connected the news with something at the time: now he knew what it was. He looked extremely grave. And when Mary went on to tell him that Mrs. Demaine had only £1500 he looked graver still.

"There isn't anything of a big sort going just now, Mary," he said in quite another tone. But he was thinking his clearest. I don't know him as well as you do," he added. "Can he *do* anything?"

"No," said Mary Smith decidedly, "he can't. But he'd go well in harness."

The Prime Minister seemed to live more actively as he considered the problem. The warm air, the scent of clothes and flowers suited him well.

The trouble with his left lung which had so endeared him to his fellow-citizens, he felt far less keenly in the beginning of a warm spring than at any other time, and evenings such as this rewarded him for the sacrifice he made every winter to his duty and to England. Of the four years during which he had held the highest of human offices he had spent but one winter on the Riviera, and though it had been necessary in one year

to forego an Autumn session, such a session had not in the other three years delayed the meeting of Parliament beyond the end of February. His youth stood him in good stead during this ordeal; but there were those (and they were they who loved him most) who looked with anxiety upon the frail form and thought, although they dared not say, that the years were slipping by and that what a man could do with impunity when still upon the right side of fifty, would become another matter when his fifty-fifth year was passed. . . . There was of course always the hope of opposition and its leisure. . . . The Broadening of the Streets Bill had roused a tempest of Party passion. . . . He had already been publicly stoned in the North. . . . But no matter; for the moment the Prime Minister was full of appreciation, and for his cousin's purposes in the kindliest of moods.

Nevertheless he thought (and his cousin read his thoughts) that she was asking the impossible. An idea struck him.

"Has Dimmy been called to the Bar?" he asked.

She looked up, puzzled. "I don't think so. . . No, I know he hasn't. I put up a hundred for him in 1908 and he buzzed it. I should certainly have heard if he had done anything more before his marriage. Naturally *since* then . . ."

"Yes, naturally," said the Prime Minister sympathetically. He mused. "He wouldn't go abroad?" he said, looking round.

"What on earth's the good of that?" said Mary Smith a little testily.

"Well," answered the Prime Minister vaguely, as he reviewed certain posts in his mind, ". . . No. There isn't much in that. Anything that could be of any use wants leading up to." And he plunged into thought again.

Then with a gesture that many had noticed in him

and had thought a mere idle trick but which was really an accompaniment to calculation, he put his ten fingers down upon his knees and lifted them slowly one after another. When he had so lifted nine (it was the ring finger of his left hand) a touch of animation passed over his face, an expression his cousin could see even in that subdued light.

"How long does he want it for?" he asked.

Mary Smith was inclined to say "For ever," but she checked herself; she remembered the face and manner of Theocritus C. Benson, she trusted his future fortune, and she said:

"I think even a little while would make a difference."

They were both thinking of the same thing. But the Prime Minister understood what perhaps she did not, that there is no such thing as autocratic intervention in our public lives, that time is required for every innovation, and that he who leads must also follow. He was reviewing as she spoke the prejudices and the ambitions of perhaps twenty men, and the power of each. When he spoke again it was as though his decision were final:

"I don't see how I could do anything for him in the House. He's hardly ever spoken, and when he did he made a fool of himself."

"Of course," said Mary sympathetically.

"He's the only man," went on Dolly reflectively, "whom I've ever seen fall right *off* a bench in the House of Commons . . ."

"You mean he's physically awkward?" replied Mary in the tone of a woman who knows how to despise such trifles—but she scented danger. "I've never known Dimmy betray one word that was confided to him," she continued gravely.

"If one were beginning all over again," said Dolly, as though thinking aloud. "But then," he added,

getting up from his chair and making as though to walk away,—"*that's* impossible,—there's Repton."

It has been said that women are inconsequent in their conversation and that if they desire to obtain a favour they do so by disconnected hints which men cannot follow. It may be so. But perhaps on this very account do they succeed. At any rate from the moment that the Prime Minister had let drop the phrase "there's Repton," Mary Smith's plan was formed. She did not like Sir Charles Repton, largely because he had not known her well. She had half forgotten him; she understood now that in some way he stood as an obstacle to what she desired for poor George, and from that moment she determined that Repton should be thrust into the House of Lords. All she said was:

"Yes, I forgot Repton."

And then she went back into the crowded rooms, pushing the friend of her girlhood playfully before her with her forefinger pressed into the small of his back, until they reached the open door and entered the main rooms.

The music of Mr. Arthur Worth's band rose, a triumphant tyrant, over the howling talk, when, during a sharp momentary and calculated pause in the tornado of violins came the loud and unexpected crash of some heavy object falling violently in the hall below. Mary Smith moved very rapidly and silently downstairs towards the sound.

It was as she expected; George Mulross had come! A little flushed and very much annoyed, he had upset the Great Stuffed Bear which stood near the door of the house. George was looking at the Prostrate Monster with angry defiance, and nothing but his dignity forbade him to attempt to raise it. The accident was enough to decide Mary. She dreaded the impression Dolly might receive if the poor lad went up now and was flurried again. She went up and put her hand on his

shoulder as he stood there. He jumped round and discovered her.

"Oh Lord!" he said.

"Dimmy," she commanded firmly, "go out at once. A great deal depends on it. Go out at once. Don't wait!"

He began to say something about his wife and a carriage.

"*Go out at once!*" said Mary Smith.

He tried to say something about his hat and coat.

Some yards before them at the open door the noise of a carriage was heard and there were servants waiting. Behind them more servants. But Mary Smith knew her world.

It was a choice of evils, and George Mulross Demaine went out into the night, hatless and coatless. The policeman were pleased to see such familiarity among the great. They doubted not that the gentleman was taking the air, but they wondered why he walked so very rapidly eastward through Mayfair.

Meanwhile from the carriage the daughter of Theocritus C. Benson came out, not without decision, and very soon the rooms of that house were filled and even its Moravian music dominated by the acuteness of her laugh and the tremendous decision of her tread.

When every one had gone, one hat and coat remained. The footman pawned them: they were those of George Mulross Demaine.

He, poor fellow, saw in all this nothing but that eternity of bad luck to which he was born. When his wife asked him next day why he had left the Petheringtons' so early, he told some ordinary lie: he had left indeed because one wiser than he had told him to leave, but he could make neither head nor tail of the whole affair: and his foot hurt him where the Bear had crushed it.

CHAPTER VI

EASTER, as those who survive will know, fell early in 1915—to be exact, upon April 4th; Ole Man Benson had returned on the 11th; on the 12th Mary had seen Dolly; and the week after Ole Man Benson's return to these shores, the week after he had delivered his important and somewhat depressing news to the young household, the week after Mary and Dolly had conferred at the Petheringtons'—was the week in which Parliament met after the Recess, the third week in April.

In that week also there began to crop up here and there unexpectedly, beautifully, like the spring flowers, short newspaper notes upon George Mulross Demaine.

They were notes of where he had been, whether he had been there nor not,—at least at first they were notes of that kind. There had always been some such notes on him in the papers, but they seemed to be getting numerous.

The public would hear that George Mulross loved his great poodle dog; next that the pressure of his engagements forbade him to open an Enormous Institution for the Cultivation and Study of Virulent Diseases, and in connection with this news the Institution was described at great length, and the passionate regrets at the absence of George Mulross Demaine sounded like a small but perceptible dirge in the corners of the daily press.

He was attacked gently but cleverly in a paper upon his own side of politics ; short biographical notes, only a few among several score gave details of his happy little ways. He was fond of riding, said one author who can have had but little intimacy with her subject ; he was fond of children, said another who had even less. He had " an eye for black game," said a third, whose lack of intimacy included not only George himself but certainly black game as well.

Later came anecdotes of his goodness of heart ; how he had run over a boy in the Park with his motor and had then picked him up ; and how he had good-humouredly refrained from telling people who he was in the railway accident, and had permitted the wounded to be taken to hospital before he himself would accept conveyance.

Finally, as the month ended, and as May brought in the London season, George Mulross began to find himself uncomfortably prominent. For he very sincerely and very heartily hated fame. He could not so much as upset a glass of wine or stumble over public stairs without hearing his name whispered ; and once when he had called at the wrong number, the servant, recognising him from some caricature in the papers, had mentioned his own name to him with reverence, though the door was the door of a house whose occupants he did not know.

Meanwhile the tiny balance at the bank had gone. The overdraft was large and at any moment there might come a note which he dreaded. And Mary Smith had compelled him to look for a small house in Westminster and to make every preparation for leaving Demaine House. He kicked feebly, but she insisted : and even Sudie gave way.

" You haven't enough to keep the house dry," Mary said. And she compelled them both to a sense of business which Theocritus himself would have failed to make them feel.

All this business was well advanced when Mary Smith proceeded to the next stage of the campaign.

She carefully looked up the nature of the Court of Dowry, and when she had learned all that she could learn from her books (it took her half a day—though she was a woman of exceptional intelligence and excellent education) she set herself to learn all that could be learned from living men.

. . . . . .

The Court of Dowry, in its very survival and still more perhaps in the functions to-day attached to it, affords an admirable example of the value of fixed institutions in the life of a people.

It was originally instituted to try cases falling within the jurisdiction of that Queen Mother of the Middle Ages to whom the poet Gray so pathetically alludes in the striking lines

> "She-wolf of France with unrelenting fangs
> Tearing the bowels," etc.

It had cognizance of all Escheats, Novels Tabulate and Malprisions Reguardaunt in the County of Ponthieu and the Seniory of Lucq. But when active jurisdiction over these continental territories was interrupted under King Henry VI., there remained no function for the Court but the trial of cases arising in or without foreign ports upon decks subject to the Crown of England.

It lingered thus into the beginning of the sixteenth century, at which moment it was reduced to a Clerk known as the *Mangeur*, and a Warden, each holding what were virtually sinecures (and not highly-paid sinecures at that) about the Palace.

Henry VIII., whom we cannot call a good but whom we may surely call a great man, rudely suppressed the office of Mangeur with a cruel jest at the executioner's expense, and only permitted the Wardenship itself to

survive on the strict understanding that the salary should be paid to himself. The title, however, remained a minor distinction among the numerous baubles of the time, and was, if I may so express it, resurrected from obscurity by the great family of Heygate at the moment of the Restoration of Charles II.

In their gladness at their recovery of a legitimate sovereign, this dominant house (now represented by the Parrells) trapped themselves in every accoutrement of joy, and, among other posts, the Wardenship of the Court of Dowry was voted in 1661 an annual salary of £2000, for which sum held by the same Act as an hereditary right, the head of the House of Heygate was content to license the annual holding of the Court within the Royal Manor and Liberties of Tooting.

At first this Court sat for one full day in each year —St. Luke's—but later, from 1731, this session was maintained in fiction alone. A crier in Westminster Hall, at the opening of every Hilary Term, would rapidly read out a list of three fictitious cases which went by default, claim seventeen and sixpence, and for ever after hold his peace.

During the eighteenth century the fixed yearly salary of £2000 hereditarily enjoyed by the Heygate family steadily grew, till, by the time of the Reform Bill, it had reached the very considerable sum of £15,000, still payable to the Heygates, though now all vestige of activity in the office had disappeared.

Our grandfathers, in the zeal of that somewhat iconoclastic moment, swept away the corrupt figment. The emoluments of the post were ruthlessly cut down to the original £2000; its hereditary character was, after a violent debate in the House of Lords, destroyed by a majority of over fifty votes, determined (as were so many of the great changes of that time!) by the voice of Eldon. The Detainer of the office (for such was his official title!) received in compensation a lump sum of half a million

only—not twenty years' purchase—and certain apparently unimportant functions were attached to the place which from that day forward became an appointment changing with the Administration.

Mark here the silent virtue of organic constitutional growth, and how a gentry can find it possible to create where demagogues would have destroyed.

Point by point and function by function, one marine interest after another attached itself to the Court of Dowry as the beautiful organisms of the sea attach themselves to the ships that plough its waters, until there had grown up round the Court of Dowry by the end of the nineteenth century so considerable a mass of precedent and custom and, with the vast extension of out maritime commerce, duties so manifold and of such moment to the nation, that the office re-emerged after its life of six centuries, an organ of capital importance in the workings of English Government.

As must be the case in any old and secure State, certain anomalous duties were further attached to it: the inspection of patent medicines for instance, the giving out of contracts for buoys and rockets, and the formal stamping of licences to sell sarsaparilla. Even so the wretched and insufficient salary of £2000 remained the sole remuneration of the Warden, though the great name of GHERKIN had raised it to be among the foremost posts of the Cabinet, and it had since seen the brilliancy, the learning and the judgment respectively of a Dibley, a Powker and a Hump. By 1912 its strict control over the great steamship lines, its supervision of wrecks, derelicts, Hunnage, Mixings, and Ports Consequent, made it second only to the Foreign Office in the matter of public interest, and, like the Foreign Office, largely removed from the wranglings of party.

Some months later the salary was raised, amid the cheers (as I have said) of a united House, to £5000 a year, with a further allowance of £5000 for the expenses

of entertainment and travel, which fall with peculiar severity upon this great Department ; and in the hands of Charles Repton it had risen to be something even more, if that were possible, than GHERKIN had made it.

So much did Mary Smith discover : partly in what she already knew, partly in her reading. The living voices of men told her further things.

It seemed that in the dingy offices which (by a lovely trait in the character of politics !) house this great Department—they stand between Parliament Street and New Scotland Yard—a certain Mr. Sorrel had for now seven years exercised his marvellous and hidden powers, and while all were prepared to admit the genius of Charles Repton, those who best knew the workings of a great Government office, spoke almost as though Mr. Sorrel were in himself the Court of Dowry.

The quaint customs attaching to the office of Warden, the little bells upon the shoes, the bearing of a model ship, bareheaded, upon Empire Day (a recent innovation and one awkward only to the bald or the blind), though to some they seemed a drawback, to others were but an additional attraction, and the ceremony of waggling in backwards upon all fours into the presence of the Sovereign at Inauguration, had been, with perhaps doubtful wisdom, abolished, to suit the eccentric Radicalism of GHERKIN, who refused to take office under any other condition.

The Accolade, or Ceremonial Stroke, however, heavily administered with a beam of ebony across the back of the Warden Accept, was retained and has often afforded a subject for illustration and archæological research.

Mary Smith learnt even more. She learnt that while decency forbade any saving to be effected on the further £5000 that was an allowance for entertainment and travel, yet custom allowed it to be spent in all forms of hospitality, and that travel might include such social

visits as were necessary to the occupant of so high an office. When she learnt this she was but the more confirmed in her determination that Charles Repton, who for the moment encumbered the post of Warden, should accept a barony, and that quickly ; for she saw the agony of Demaine House already begun. Upon a certain morning in the mid-week of May the last stage of her beneficent action was ready.

. . . . . .

In his study on that same morning, Charles Repton, a little weary but with all his action planned and designed, suffered again for a moment that slight dull pain behind the ears, where Caryll's Ganglia are : he was dazed. He went out and sought his wife, and she was astonished to see as he put to her some simple question on the management of the household, a look of innocence in his eyes. It quickly faded. The pain also departed, and he returned to his study.

. . . . . .

Mary Smith sent a note over to Demaine House.

Mary's note found George Mulross Demaine risen after a lonely lunch and wondering, as he regularly wondered every day, what was going to turn up.

His wonder had bewilderment in it also. Something was going to turn up he knew . . . people were noticing him so. Only last evening there was a savage attack upon him in the *Moon*, saying that he had torn Hares to pieces with his own reeking hands, and killed a Carted Stag with a blunt knife ; while the *Capon*, with more truth, had pointed out the beauty of the Sir Joshuas in his house, but had erroneously suggested that they were heirlooms in his family.

He was still gazing at the May morning and gloomily considering the buds in the formal garden, when Mary's note was forced upon him by a huge Dependant.

A note in the firm hand of Mary Smith was always a pleasant thing to get; for a bewildered man it had something in it of salvation.

George Mulross went in a mood lighter than any he had known for many weeks, towards his cousin's house. He found her, of course, alone.

"Dimmy," she said, lifting his hand gently from the chimneypiece where he was moving it aimlessly among several breakable and valuable things,—"Dimmy, when did you last ask a question in the House?"

He looked frightened, and said:

"Oh! ages ago,"

"Now look here, Dimmy," she said smoothly, "I want you to go and ask this to-day,"—and she handed him a bit of paper.

"Have you got any money in it?" he asked innocently.

"No, certainly not," she answered. "You silly ass! What could that have to do with it? Read it."

He read: "*Mr. G. M. Demaine: to ask the Prime Minister whether his attention has been called to the fact that the Van Huren Company is not registered in London as the law provides, and what steps he proposes to take in view of this evasion of a public safeguard?*"

"What on earth have I to do with that?" he asked, looking up at her, a little put out and evidently unwilling to take any risks. "What is it anyhow?"

"Now look here, Dimmy," she said, "do be a good fellow: it's all for your good."

"Well anyhow," he said, "I can't get an answer for two days."

"Yes you can," she said, "I've sent Dolly a little note typewritten, and signed it in your name; and you can call it a 'matter of which you have given him private notice.'"

"Oh, you have!" said Demaine, almost moved to energy.

"Yes, I have," said Mary Smith firmly. "There are a hundred and eight questions to-day; it's half-past three, and you've time to get down to the House comfortably. I'll take you there."

She did: and amid the general indifference of most members in a crowded House, the amusement of perhaps a couple of dozen, and the red-hot silent rage of at least two, G. M. Demaine, in a half-audible voice, mumbled his query.

The Prime Minister received more than a murmur of applause when he answered in his clear and rather high voice that in a matter of such importance and in a moment such as this, it was not to the interest of the country to give a public reply.

If there was one thing George Mulross Demaine dreaded more than another it was to be questioned, and still more to be congratulated, upon things he did not understand. Luckily for him a scene of some violence connected with the religious differences of the Scotch, prevented the immediate opening of the debate at the end of Questions, and he had the opportunity to slip away. But to his terror he found the motor waiting for him and Mary Smith beckoning him from within; like the fascinated bird of the legend he was captured. He hoped that she would drive him to some more congenial air. But no, she produced, from a large and business-like wallet which she only carried in her most imperious moments, two questions to be set down for the day after the morrow.

He took them with a groan and yielded as yield he must to her command that he should set them down. They were of no importance, the one was to his uncle by a second marriage, the First Civil Lord, to ask him the name of a Company that had proved less able than was expected in the manufacture of armour plates; the other to his cousin the Chancellor of the Exchequer, asking if the action of some obscure servant of the

Treasury in a peaceful Buckinghamshire village had received the attention which his recent services seemed to require.

The day and hour came round. George Mulross, in a voice perhaps a little more assured than that of two days before, said when his turn came: "Twenty-nine."

To his surprise the Chancellor of the Exchequer answered with some tartness that he had nothing whatever to add to his predecessor's answer of July 9th ten years before, and added amid general approval, that insinuations such as were those contained in the question were greatly to be deplored.

A man of excitable temperament had already leapt to his feet to ask a supplementary question when he was sharply checked by the Chair and the curious incident closed.

Some ten minutes passed and once again, sweating with fear, Demaine heard his name called out and said in a voice still audible: "Fifty-four.—I mean Forty-five."

The first Lord of the Admiralty rose solemnly in all the dignity of his great white beard, adjusted his spectacles, looked fully at the intruder upon his peace, and said with his unmistakable accent, that the name of the Company could be dithcovered through the ordinary thourceth of information.

So the game continued for ten days. In vain did his friends assure him that he was losing position in the House by this perpetual pose of the puritan and the sleuth hound. Mary Smith was a woman who must be obeyed, and of twenty-three questions which she put into his unwilling lips at least one had gone home. And the First Lord of the Admiralty in the same dignity of the same white beard and with the same striking accent, had admitted the nethethity of thtriking from the litht of contractorth the name of the firm of which, until

that moment, the unhappy George Mulross had never even heard.

He knew, he felt, that he, the most blameless of men, was making enemies upon every side. The allusions to his public spirit which were now occasionally to be discovered in the Opposition papers, the little bitter sentences in those which were upon the contrary subsidised by his own party, filled him with an equal dread.

He was in no mood for going further, when upon the top of all this Mary Smith quietly insisted that he must make a speech.

It need not be long: she would write it out for him herself. He must learn it absolutely by heart and must take the greatest care to pronounce the words accurately. She chose a debate in which he could talk more or less at large and put before him as gentle, as well reasoned, as terse and as broad-minded a piece of wisdom as the House might have listened to for many months.

Morning and afternoon, a patient governess, Mary Smith heard him recite that speech; but as day succeeded day she slowly determined that it wouldn't do. One slip might be his ruin. Upon the tenth rehearsal he still said "very precious" for "meretricious." He was still unable to restrain a sharp forward movement at the words "I will go a step further;" and he could never get in its right order the simple phrase: "I yield to no one in my admiration for the right honourable gentleman."

First he would yield to a right honourable gentleman; then no one would yield to him; then he would yield to no admiration, and at last she gave it up in despair.

A woman of less tenacity would have abandoned her design; not so Mary Smith. She discovered with careful art that there was no reason why a Warden of the Court of Dowry should speak in the House at all; he might hold his post for three years and do no more

than answer questions, leaving to a subordinate the duty of speaking upon those very rare public Bills, which, however distantly, concerned his office.

She had already made him a name; she was determined not to destroy it by following up this false scent of training him to public speaking. At last, as the month of May was drawing to a close, she determined to put him upon the rails.

Dolly and she were agreed. Perhaps Dimmy would need to be persuaded; he was naturally modest, and what was more, he would very certainly be afraid, but still more certainly he wanted money most abominably.

When the day came for him to receive his great illumination she called him to her once more, and once more he found her alone. She lunched him first, and gave him a wine of which she knew he could drink in moderation, for she felt he would need courage; she let him drink his coffee, she lit her own tiny cigar, and at last she said:

"Dimmy, what does it take you to live?"

"I don't know" said Dimmy with some terror in his eyes.

Mary Smith looked at him a little quizzically. He did not like those looks though he was fond of her. It made him feel like an animal.

"Dimmy," she said, "could you and Sudie manage it on seven thousand a year, or say on six thousand?"

Dimmy thought long and painfully. For him there were but two scales of income, the poor and the rich. In the days when it was such a bore to raise a sovereign, he was poor. For nearly two years with an unlimited capital behind him, and about twenty thousand a year for his wife to spend, he had considered himself positively and fixedly among the rich. He had felt comfortable, he had had elbow room. Six thousand pounds puzzled him: it was neither one thing nor the other. A brilliant thought struck him.

"Can you tell me, Mary," he said gently, "some one who has got about six thousand? I think I could judge *then*."

"I can tell you one positively," said Mary Smith. "Charlie Fitzgerald and his wife. Till the old Yid dies they've got six thousand exactly. I ought to know, considering that I went over every scrap of paper in order to make sure of Charlie repaying me."

"Oh!" said Demaine judicially. "Charlie Fitzgerald and his wife. . . ." He thought for a long time. "Well, they're pretty comfortable," he said suddenly. "Of course they haven't got a place and grounds; I suppose if they had a place and grounds they couldn't do it."

"No," said Mary, "but the house in Westminster is very large when you get inside through the narrow part. When are you going into Westminster, Dimmy?"

"I don't know," said Dimmy hopelessly. "Sudie's got all muddled about it. She saw 'City of Westminster' stuck up on one of those khaki Dreadnought hats that the street sweepers wear, an' the man was getting horrors into a cart right up by our house, an' she said that where we *were* was Westminster anyhow. And then when I argued with her she shoved me to the window and pointed out his hat. She was quite rough." And George Mulross sighed.

Mary Smith got testy. "Don't talk rubbish," she said, "and don't bother me about your wife. Have you looked at anything in Westminster at all?"

"I don't know," said Demaine humbly.

"You must know," said Mary sharply, and with a strong inclination to slap him. "Have you looked in Dean's Yard, for instance?"

"Yes," said Demaine, slowly reviewing his perambulations of the last few days. "Yes, I've looked at Dean's Yard. There's nothing there. . . All the rest seems to be so slummy, Mary."

"There are some exceedingly good new houses," said Mary severely, "and everybody's going there; and the old houses are perfectly delicious. Anyhow Westminster's the place; and I'll tell you something else. You've got to take office!"

George Mulross, worried as he always was when she began drilling him, on hearing the word "office" said simply:

"Well I won't, that's flat. I don't believe in it. I've seen lots of men do that kind of thing. They get to the City and they think they're learning business, and they're rooked before . . ."

"I said 'TAKE office'!" shouted Mary Smith, "TAKE office—get a post. . . Dolly will give you a post. Now do you understand?"

"What?" said Demaine vaguely.

"Dimmy," she said more quietly but with great firmness, "look at me."

He looked at her. It was a muscular strain upon his eyes to keep them fixed under her superior will.

"That's right. . . Now listen carefully. The salary of the Wardenship of the Court of Dowry is five thousand a year—and ex's."

"Yes," said Demaine.

"When the Wardenship of the Court of Dowry is vacant—if you play up worth tuppence, it's yours for the asking. Do . . . you . . . understand?"

"I don't know," repeated George Demaine.

It was as though he had been told that he had been asleep all these years, that his real name was Jones and that he lived in Australia, or as though he had discovered himself to be covered with feathers. He was utterly at sea. Then he said slowly:

"Repton's Warden of the Court of Dowry." He was proud of knowing this, for he often blundered about the Cabinet.

"Will you or will you not fix your mind upon what I have said?" said Mary Smith.

The full absurdity of it grew increasingly upon Demaine's imagination. "The House would think Dolly was mad," he remarked with really beautiful humility.

"Nonsense!" said Mary Smith in disgust, "the House will know nothing about it one way or the other. The House doesn't meddle with government—thank God! You're popular enough I suppose?"

"Oh yes," said Demaine.

"And you never speak, do you?"

"No," said Demaine, "only once three years ago, the time I fell down, you know; an' that was quite short."

"How many people do you know in the House?" she asked.

"I don't know," said Demaine.

"Oh NONSENSE! . . . I mean how many people would write to you, for instance, and congratulate you?"

Demaine gave it up. But one could see from his demeanour what she had guessed from her own study of the debates and from her great knowledge of London: a month ago people just knew that Demaine was in the House and that was about all. They knew him now as a man whose name they had seen fifty times and who asked questions. A better candidature could not be conceived, and his close family connection with so many men on both front benches would render the appointment reasonable in all eyes.

All sorts of things were lumbering against each other in George Mulross' brain. He wondered whether one had to know anything, or what one had to do, and how the money was paid; and whether income tax was deducted at source; and how long the Government would stay in. Then the absurdity of it recurred to him.

"Of course there was Pitson," he murmured, "and everybody laughed and said he was a half-wit,—but

he was in with everybody, although he was a half-wit

"So are you," said Mary.

"Yes, but I don't laugh and go about as he did."

"It's against a man to laugh much," said Mar "and really if it comes to going about, even a dog ca do that. You've only got to go and sniff round people

The conversation could not profitably be continue Demaine had been introduced to the idea, and that w all Mary desired to do.

She sent him home and invited herself that wee end to a house in which she would find Dolly: t Kahns'—but no matter. Dolly was there.

When the Prime Minister saw that dear figure hers with its promise of importunities he groaned spirit. She brought him up to the sticking point duri a long walk on Sunday afternoon, and he promised h that at least he would sound.

"But I don't know, Mary," he said, half trying retreat, "Repton's not a man to speak unless he choose and he's like a stone wall against one unless he al chooses to hear."

"Take him walking as I'm taking you," said Mar

It was Sunday, the 31st of May. The weather h begun to be large and open and warm. He thoug there was something in what she said.

"Meet him as he comes out of his house to-morro Do you know when he comes out?"

"Yes," said the Prime Minister a little shamefaced "I do. It's always half-past nine."

"Well," said Mary, "I really don't see what yo trouble is."

"It's an absurd hour to catch a man, half-past ni —and I should have to get up God knows when—b sides to-morrow's a bad day," said the Premier, pressi his lips together when he had spoken. "It's a b moment. It's a big week for him. He's got a dinn on that's something to do with his dam compan

to-morrow evening. I know that. And then Tuesday he's got that big Van Diemens meeting in the City And before the end of the week, I know he's talking at the big Wycliffite Conference—I can't remember the day though. Pottle told me about it."

They had turned to go home, and Mary Smith for the first hundred yards or so was honestly wondering in her mind why men found so difficult what women find so easy.

"I've told you what to do," she said. "Catch him by accident outside his house as he leaves after breakfast, then he'll walk with you. Say you're walking. Anything can be said when one's walking."

"Are you sure he'll come with me?" asked the Prime Minister.

"Positive!" said Mary Smith in a very quiet tone.

The air was serene above them, and one lark had found his way so high that they could hardly hear him singing. The Prime Minister wished from the bottom of his heart that he could live in that field for a week. He rose to one despairing rally:

"Mary," he said, "suppose it rains?"

"Oh Dolly, Dolly, Dolly!" she answered, stopping short and standing in front of him. "It's for all the world as though you were just back f om school for the last time, and I was a little girl who had been sent for on the grand occasion to tea."

She put both hands on his awkward shoulders to stop him, and she kissed him anywhere upon the face.

"It won't rain, Dolly," she said, "I've seen to that."

CHAPTER VII

CHARLES REPTON had taken no week-ends Charles Repton had sat tight in London.

The end of that May did not tempt him to move; he was right on to his business, and never had his silent life been more silent or Maria, Lady Repton felt more alone, though she did as she was bid and remained immovable in her London house only seeing when the leisure was afforded her, her few dear friends (none conspicuous), and on e or twice presiding at a great dinner of her husband's.

Beyond all his other concerns one chief concern wa resolving itself in Charles Repton's head. He wa wondering exactly where he stood betw en commerc and politics.

These moments, not of doubt but of a necessity fo decision, are the tests of interior power. Some half dozen such moments had marked the career of his stric soul: one when he had determined to risk the transitio from his native town to Newcastle, carefully calculatin the capital of clients and how much could be successfull lent in that centre: another, when he had risked th expense of his first election: a third when he had decide to take office—and there were others.

Now as May drew to its close, as the discussion on th Budget was in full swing and as the eager public notic of Van Diemens was on the point of filling the press, h was in some balance as to whether the precise proportio of activity which he gave to the House of Commons—

t was a large proportion—might not be absorbing just oo much of his energy.

He calculated most exactly—as a man calculates a measurable thing, an acreage, or a weight of metal—what the future proportions should be.

He must remain in touch with everything that passed at Westminster; on that he was fixed. But he knew that there was a growing criticism of his combination of high political idealism with affairs in the City. The *Moon* had said one exceedingly unpleasant thing about the Oil concession in Burmah—it was only a newspaper, but he had had to settle it. The *Capon* was paying a little more attention than he liked to his position in the House of Commons.

He thought hard, and under the process of his thought his mind somewhat cleared. But he had come to no decision when, late in the night of Sunday, the 31st of May, he marshalled the papers upon his desk, deliberately turned his mind off the problems that had been engaging him, and drew up a list of his next engagements.

The next day, Monday the 1st of June, after leaving his house punctually at half-past nine, he was to give half the morning to the Wardenship. He was to return home at noon. From noon to lunch he must see to his accounts. It was doubly important, for it was a Monday and it was the first of the month. He would lunch: preferably alone, for he would be tired, and he would give Maria to understand that he must be undisturbed.

On Tuesday, the 2nd, was the speech to the General Meeting of Van Diemens. He glanced at his notes for that speech: they were all in excellent sequence, and he felt, so far as men of that stern temper can feel it, a little touch of pride when he noted the procession of the argument. He saw in his mind's eye first the conviction and then the enthusiasm of the men whom he must convince: the vivid portrayal of the Empire's

need of the railway: the ease of duilbing it—,the delivery of the great metaphor wherein he compared that thin new line of iron to the electrical connection which turns potential and useless electrical energy into actual and working force.

He re-read the phrase in which he called it "completing the circuit;" he did not doubt at all that the meeting would follow him. Sentence after sentence passed before his memory (for he had carefully learned the preoration by heart); the name of Nelson shone in one of them, the name of Rhodes in another, of Joel in a third, till the great oration closed with a vision, brief, succinct but how vivid!) of t e Gat: of the East and of England's hand upon it, holding

> " the keys
> Of such teeming destinies"

through them: through them!

It was a great speech.

He turned more carelessly to the already type-written stuff which he must deliver upon the Thursd y to the Wycliffite Conference. It would do—and it was of importance for the moment. It reminded him a little contemptuously of the High Meat Teas in the North of England and of his youth, and of that maundering war between Church and Chapel which was then of real moment to him, and which now he still had wearily to wage—at least in public.

Whether this little bout of study had been too much for a man who had already spent a full month glued to his work, or whatever else was the cause, he felt as midnight approached a trifle brain-sick. He leant his head upon his hand, and it seemed to him —he hoped it was an illusion, for the sensation was yet vague—but it *did* seem to him that the pain behind the ears, or at least an oppression there, was beginning. He muttered

n exclamation so sharp as would have astonished those who had never seen him under a strain. Then he went quickly upstairs to the drawing-room and found his wife, sitting all alone with her book.

She looked up as he entered, and again she was startled by that strange innocence in his eyes. Odd (but what living!) flashes of thirty, of forty years ago pierced her heart. Youth goes down every lane, and these two, just after their marriage, just before the first loan he had made, had been, for a month or so, young: the memory of it was a jewel to her.

He came in at that instant loosened: he was walking ill: he made towards her as though he were seeking a refuge, and still that persistent innocence shone from his eyes. He sat down beside her, breathing uncertainly, groped out and took her hand. He had made no such movement since—what year? Since before that first hardening had frightened her? How many years, how long a life ago?

The mood was of no long duration. She could have wished it had been longer. He slept with a sort of deep lethargy that was not his way, and twice in the night she rose to watch him; but with the morning all his powers and, alas! all that difference had returned.

She was to see nothing of him while he went through every detail of his affairs for the week and the month with his assistant; she was not even to be allowed to see something of him at his midday meal; she watched him as he went out of the house at the invariable hour to drive to the office of the Court of Dowry. And as she watched him with new feelings in her, and the breaking of dead crusts, she saw another man accost him, the cab turned away, and the two go together, walking towards the Park. She knew the figure though she came so little into the life of London, and she recognised, in the sloppy clothes and the stooping walk, the Prime Minister.

. . . . . .

If you are a member of the governing classes of this great Empire it is not an easy thing to approach a house between the Edgware Road and Hyde Park from the North, at half-past nine in the morning it is supremely difficult if you are making for Westminster.

It presupposes being carted at an impossible hour to some place in the North West, and there let loose and making a run for home. And why should any man of position be carted to any place in the North West at dawn? On the whole the best excuse is Paddington Station. Eton is a good place to come from, for the liar comes in at Paddington. It was from Eton, therefore, that the Prime Minister came that morning . . anyhow he was N.W. of the Park before nine. He walked slowly towards the Marble Arch. As he approached Charles Repton's house he walked somewhat more slowly, but he had timed himself well.

The tall straight figure came out and hailed a cab.

The Prime Minister crossed before him, turned round in amiable surprise, and said: "My *dear* Repton!"

And Repton greeted, with somewhat less effusion, the Prime Minister.

"I was walking from Paddington," said the Prime Minister.

"Have you eaten?" said Sir Charles, as he paid the cabman a shilling for nothing.

"Yes, I breakfasted before I started. I was walking down to Westminster. Can't you come with me?"

Sir Charles found it perfectly easy, and the two men walked through the Park together towards Hyde Park Corner and Constitution Hill.

To most men the difficulty of the transition from daily converse to important transactions is so difficult that they will postpone it to the very end of an interview. The Prime Minister was not of that kind. They had not got two hundred yards beyond that large arena near the Marble Arch wherein every Sunday the

Saxon folk thresh out and determine for ever the antinomy of predestination and free will—not to mention other mysteries of the Christian religion,—when the Prime Minister had reminded Charles Repton of the absolute necessity of a new man on the Government bench in the House of Lords.

Charles Repton heartily agreed, and for ten minutes gave his reasons. He hoped, he said in an iron sort of way, that he was talking sense, and that he was not meddling with things not his business. He was warmly encouraged to go on, and he minutely described the kind of man whom he thought was wanted. They had too many business men as it was, and there were too many men fresh from the House of Commons. The Government forces in the Upper House had come to be a sort of clique, half of them very intelligent, but now and then, especially in big debates, out of touch with their colleagues. Could not some man of real position, a man with a long established title, wealthy and thoroughly well known if only in a small world for some proficiency of his, be got to take an interest in the Government programme? A man like Pulborough, for instance? If Pulborough had had to earn his living he would have been the best bantam breeder alive. And then, look at his talents, why, he designed all the new work at Harberry himself, etc. And so forth.

As they were crossing by the Wellington statue, the Prime Minister, in the uneasy intervals of dodging the petrol traffic, explained that that was not in his mind. He must have some one who had heard everything in the Cabinet for the last two years. "Repton," he said . . . (as they left the refuge pavement—a taxi-cab all but killed him). . . "Repton, would you, have you thought of . . ." Two gigantic motor-buses swerved together and the politicians were separated. The Prime Minister saw the Warden far ahead, a successful man, whole upon the further shore. The Prime

Minister leapt in front of a bicycle, caught the kerb and ended his sentence ". . . a peerage yourself ? "

They had come through all the perils of that space and were walking quietly down Constitution Hill ; Dolly could develop his thought more freely, and in the most natural way in the world he put it that they could not do without Charles Repton.

He was very careful not to force the position. Charles Repton was absolutely essential : they must have him or they must have nobody.

An Egyptian smile, a smile of granite, could be guessed rather than seen upon Charles Repton's firm lips.

" Would you propose that I should be Master of the Horse ? " he said.

" No," said the Prime Minister, smiling very much more easily, " nor Manager of the King's Thoroughbred Stud, either. But I know that Abenford is mortally tired of the Household ; though what there is to be tired of," he added . . .

To the Prime Minister's very great surprise, Charles Repton simply replied : " If I went to the Lords, I should go without office."

At this unexpected solution the Prime Minister was in duty bound to propose a hundred reasons against it. He implored Repton to remember his great position and the peculiar value that he had for him, the Prime Minister. " It's never more than three men that do the work, Repton, whether you're dealing with ten in committee or half a thousand. You know that."

But Charles Repton was firm. These solid masters of finance are glad to think out their world ; in a sense nothing comes to them that is unexpected when it comes Their brains may be compared to the great new War Office in Whitehall, where a hundred minutely detailed plans for the invasion of Germany, France, Russia, Spain, Italy and the Baltic States, lie pigeonholed, in perfect order, ready to be put into immediate execution

at the pronouncement of the stern words *Kriegmobil.*

Long before the simple intrigues of the drawing-rooms had taken shape, Charles Repton had swept the whole landscape with his inward eye. He knew every fold of the terrain, he had measured every range. He had determined that, upon the whole, a peerage was worth his while : now ; at the very height of his fortune.

To have a permanent place, free from office, with the prestige of title, with committees open to him and every official source permanently to his hand, was worth his while. It was worth his while to go to the House of Lords had it been a matter for his free choice ; and if he went to the House of Lords he must go a free man It would do more to save Van Diemens than any other step, and that great Company was worth twenty places in the Cabinet. Van Diemens was the master of this Cabinet and the last.

He had made up his mind then that a peerage was worth his while even if it depended entirely on his choice. Now that he could make it a favour, it was doubly worth his while. The alternative meant useless friction. . . . Yes, he would take that peerage : but there was one thing that he must have quite clear :—

The two men walked together in silence past the Palace ; they went through the superb new entrance to St. James's Park, crossed the bridge, and turned towards Westminster.

It had been a shock. The relief for the Prime Minister was somewhat too great, and the last thing that Repton had to say was awkward ; but he was accustomed to leap such hedges. He began boldly :

" Do you happen to know what I have set aside for the regular purposes of the Party ? " he asked.

The Prime Minister shook his head. If there was one thing he detested, it was the kitchen side of politics.

" Well, I'll tell you," said Repton. " I've put exactly

the same sum aside every year for fifteen years, whether we've been in office or out of it. Not a large sum, only five hundred pounds. Pottle will tell you."

The Premier made such a movement with his head as showed that he did not care.

"Only five hundred pounds, but exactly five hundred pounds," continued Repton firmly. "Now Pottle must understand quite clearly that that subscription will neither be increased nor diminished." He spoke as men speak in a shop, and in a shop of which they have the whip hand.

"That's between you and Pottle," said the Prime Minister in the tone of one who doesn't want to go on with the subject.

"Yes," said Repton, looking straight in front of him, "it *has* got to be understood quite clearly. I've made it a standing order. Pottle's never pestered me, but he *can* pester like the deuce. . . And I've absolutely made up my mind."

"Of course, of course," said the Prime Minister. "I think it's wise," he went on,—"It isn't my business but I do think it wise to keep in touch with the Central Office. But it's between you and Pottle."

There was another long silence as they went down Great George Street.

"That's all," said Repton, opposite the Pugin fountain. The two men walked on. The statues of great men long dead looked down upon them; those statues were unused to such conversations. One of the statues must have thought Charles Repton a tactless fellow, but Charles Repton had calculated everything, even to his chances of life and to the number of active years that probably lay before him. And nothing would have more offended or disturbed him than any ambiguity upon the business side of the transaction.

They parted, one for the Court of Dowry, the other for Downing Street, and the affair was settled.

. . . . . .

That afternoon the Prime Minister asked Demaine to come and have a cup of tea. He said he would rather it was in his own room ; he took Demaine's arm and led him round.

"Have you anything on to-night, Dimmy?" he said.

Dimmy thought. "I don't know," he answered after a long examination of possible engagements.

"Well, you've got to be here for the division anyhow."

"Oh yes," said Dimmy. His high record of divisions was the sheet anchor of his soul : he had sat up all night sixteen times.

"Well," said the Prime Minister hesitating, as though after all he didn't want to drink a cup of tea, "you might see me then . . . no, come along now."

And as they drank their tea he told his companion that there was to be a change in the Cabinet.

"Now," he said, "I want to leave you perfectly free." He seemed to be suffering a little as he said it, but he went on tenaciously : "I want to leave you perfectly free ; . . . but of course you know your name has been put before me?"

"I don't know," began Demaine.

The Prime Minister stopped him with his hand. "Well, anyhow it *has*." He paused and thought. "I can't tell how it would suit you, but I think I can tell how you would suit it. Now on *that* point I'm satisfied, Dimmy. You know the kind of work it is?"

But Demaine didn't know.

"Well," said the Prime Minister, leaning back easily and joining his hands, "it's like all those things : you've got your staff . . . in one way the works cut and dried. It's very varied work. No man can be expected to grasp it all round. But," (leaning forward) "like all these things, it wants a sort of general point of view, you understand me?"

Dimmy did not dare to shake his head.

"It wants a sort of . . ." the Prime Minister swept his hand over the table—"a sort of what I may call a —well, a—a *common sense*, especially about sudden things. You have to decide sometimes. . . . But you'll soon get into it," he added in a tone of relief. "You'll have Sorrel with you all the first few days; he's exceedingly easy to get on with; he's been there for years—that is, of course, if you take it."

"Yes," said Demaine in a whirl, "yes, if I take it I shall have Sorrel."

"Then of course," went on the Prime Minister rapidly, "it's the kind of place which you can make anything of. It can count enormously; it counted enormously under Gherkin until he died. And Repton of course has made quite a splash in it."

Demaine shuddered slightly.

"But there's no necessity," continued the other quickly, "it's really better without a splash. It's a plodding sort of attention that's wanted," he ended wearily; then with an afterthought he added: "Why not go to Sorrel now?"

"Couldn't you give me a note?" asked Demaine nervously.

"Oh nonsense," answered his cousin, upon whom the strain was beginning to tell. "Just go up and see him in his office. He's the mildest of men."

"All right," said Demaine sighing. He finished his tea and went out,—and as he left the Prime Minister called after him: "Don't forget to find me after the division to-night. Then I can tell you if anything is settled."

Demaine walked undeterminedly towards the Dowry Offices behind Scotland Yard; his heart failed him; he did not go in. He stood aimlessly in Whitehall, staring at the traffic; his knees were not quite straight and his mouth was half open.

Past him, as he so stood, strode, full of vigour and of will, the fixed form of Sir Charles Repton, walking towards Trafalgar Square. The younger man followed him with his eyes and felt in his heart what a gulf there was between them. He was by no means of those who dare, and the thought of office appalled him. Then suddenly he remembered the salary. His legs straightened beneath him and he forced himself up the stairs to where he might ask to see Mr. Sorrel.

CHAPTER VIII

SIR CHARLES REPTON strode up Whitehall. His day's work had been heavy, in the hours since that morning conversation, and he was suffering.

It was no spiritual suffering which affected that strong character: his life was fixed; the decision he had taken was final. Nay, every circumstance surrounding that decision delighted him. The peerage had been offered at precisely the right moment; he himself could have chosen no better. It was the moment when he particularly desired to be at once more powerful, if that could be, and yet free; more fixed in his political tenure, yet more at large to catch the hand of opportunity. For all his strategy was centred upon the Company which he was determined to save.

That from which he now suffered was physical; he suffered that pain at the back of the head: it had a novel intensity about it; it was not exactly a headache, it was a sort of weight, an oppression, and as he went on northward the pressure got worse and more concentrated just behind either ear.

He would not relax his pace. He saw a taxi which had just discharged a fare at Cox's Bank; in spite of the trouble in his head which was rapidly increasing, he was clear enough to note that the little flag was up, that the man was free and was about to go away. He signnalled to him and got in, and gave the address of his house, bidding him call at the Club on his way.

He remembered, though the bother was getting worse, that there was a big dinner that evening; he tried to remember the names, then quite suddenly a stab of pain behind the right ear almost made him cry out. But Repton was indomitable and he stifled the cry. Hardly had he so conquered himself when he felt another similar violent agony behind the left ear: a man less master of himself would have fainted. It was over in a moment, but he was white and actually uncertain of his steps when he got out at the Club and went up to the porter's box to ask for letters and messages. There were none.

"Are you certain there are none?" he asked in a weak voice.

That query was so unusual from the man that the porter looked up surprised.

"Don't look at me as though I was stuffed," said Sir Charles sharply, "don't you know what your place is worth?"

The man grumbled a little.

With the most unworthy ferocity, but perhaps the pain must excuse him, Sir Charles bent his head in to the little window in the glass and hissed: "This kind of thing has happened before. Just you bally well sort the papers in front of you and make sure."

His hands were trembling with constricted rage; the porter ran through the bundle, and found a card.

"What did I tell you, you b——y snipe!" darted the now uncontrollable Baronet. Then recovering himself he said with no shame but in a little confusion: "I've had enough of this." He looked at the card: it was an advertisement inviting him to spend a week for eleven guineas in lovely Lucerne, and there was a picture of the Rigi Kulm. He tore the card up savagely, threw it into the waste-paper basket, hurriedly went down the steps of his Club, bolted into the taxi and slammed the door behind him.

The driver had let the engine stop. Sir Charles sat

tapping either foot, his eyes alight, and his hands working nervously. The man was working the barrel organ in front of the machine; the piston started once or twice vigorously, then died down again. Sir Charles got out.

"If you can't make your damn kettle go," he said, —then he suddenly smiled. "What a good-natured face you have," he remarked with an abrupt transition of tone. "It's a brutal thing for men like me with enormous incomes to bully people who have to be out in all weathers, though I must say you taxi-men are a privileged lot? You've always got a herd of poor fellows round you, running messages for you and what not. You know," he went on still more familiarly, "if you didn't look so jolly good-natured I wouldn't get into the cab again: but I will now. I will now," he nodded reassuringly to show there was no ill-feeling, and he climbed again into the taxi, which at last started off upon its journey.

Sir Charles, within that vehicle, preserved for some moments the expression of strong silence which was at least one-half of his fortune. Suddenly that expression broke down; something tickled him hugely. Such a merry look came into his eyes as had perhaps not visited them since he was a child—if then. It occurred to him to look out of the window. The fact that the window was up in no way incommoded him. He butted his head through it and then very cautiously drew it in again.

"That's dangerous," he muttered, "might have cut myself."

The driver of the taxi heard nothing. Sir Charles looked through the star of broken glass for a moment, then cautiously lowered the sash. He put his head out again, smiling almost to the point of laughter, and asked the driver whether he had noticed the absurd pomposity of the two sentries and the policemen outside Marlborough House. The taxi man simply said "Yes sir," and went on driving.

For a few minutes Sir Charles was silent, ruminating and smiling within. Then he put his head out again.

"Yes, but did you?" he asked.

And just at that point the traffic was stopped to allow a cross current from another street to pass.

"What a fool a man can make of himself," said Sir Charles suddenly to nobody, communing half aloud with his own soul. "It's an amazing thing! I can't conceive why I should put my head out of a window like that to tell him the way. . . . I suppose I was telling him the way. . . but my head is so bad! . . . What a fool a man can make of himself!" The sternness of his expression returned. He remembered that the taxi-man knew his address and he bethought him how to escape from humiliation. When they had driven up to his house he would pretend it was the wrong number and drive somewhere else.

Yet again his mood changed and he burst into an explosion of laughter as he remembered the sentries. Then the name over a shop which recalled to him certain mortgages tickled his fancy. He almost stopped the taxi to get out and have a bout of fun with the proprietors of that shop, but he was going swiftly through the streets and he preferred his ease.

Long before they reached the Marble Arch he had forgotten all about his intention of secrecy. Nay, he had forgotten about his dinner; he only knew he was going home. And when he got out he saw upon the little machine the notice "1/10."

"The register marks one and tenpence," he said slowly and gravely to the driver, upon whose honest and happy face the tendency to astonishment was hardly controlled. "Now I don't think these machines are infallible—far from it—but it isn't worth my while, you understand, to argue it. So there's one and tenpence." He laboriously counted out the money. "Wait a moment," he said, "give me back three coppers."

The man hesitated.

"Give me back three coppers," snapped Sir Charles testily, "I want to get rid of a thruppeny bit," and he handed over the offensive coin.

"Now wait a minute, wait a minute," he added, "don't be in a hurry. I always give a tip to taxi drivers—I really don't know why," he said with a sudden change of expression, "there's no particular favour, and they earn lots of money. But one's got to—I suppose if one didn't," he continued in a ruminative tone, "they'd mark one in some way, same way they do the boxes in hotels, and your watch, me boy, when you pawn it," he ended with an explosion of mirth, digging the man sharply in the ribs. "Eh?" He pulled out two pence, added another penny, and then another, took out a sixpence, put it back again, finally put the three pence into the man's hand, and went up to his door.

The taxi-man as he was driving off nodded familiarly to a policeman, and, by drawing up all one side of his face while he left the other in repose, gave it to be understood that he had grave doubts of the mental balance of the gentleman whom he had just conveyed to his residence.

Alas, for simple men! The policemen strode up to him, rated him soundly, asked what he meant by it, and in general gave him to understand that he was dealing with no ordinary household. And the taxi-man, who was but recently landed from the sea, went off pondering, as far as the congested traffic would allow him, upon the mysteries of London.

The policeman solemnly returned to his duty, which was that of guarding the residence of so great a citizen, and Sir Charles, putting his hat upon the table in the hall, went past the two servants upon whose presence in that vestibule he insisted, and walked majestically up the staircase, as though the last half-hour had not been.

But he felt during this progress unaccountable desires.

Before he was half-way up they were too strong for him. He stopped, leaned over the bannisters, looked at the two well-trained domestics who stood like statues below him, and said: "Henry!"

Henry, with a perfect turn of the head, answered, "Yes, Sir Charles?"

"William!"

William, with a precisely similar change of attitude, said, "Yes, Sir Charles?"

"What does it feel like to stand like that when another man, who simply happens to be richer than you, is going by?"

The well-trained domestics made no reply.

"Are you dumb?" he shouted angrily. "What's it feel like, I say? . . . Blasted fools!" he muttered, when he had endured for a few seconds their continued silence. He went on up the stairs, saying half to himself and half to them: "Catch *me* doing it. Why, there's more money in a whelk stall!"

He found his wife reading. She put down her book and asked him timidly what had been going on in the House.

His only answer was to put his hand to his head and say that he was suffering.

And so he was, for the pain, though less violent, had returned. She suggested, though very hesitatingly, that he should lie down. He made no reply. He put his hand before his eyes and waited with set teeth until the first violence of the pang had passed, and then said to her gently: "I beg your pardon, dear, what did you say?"

It was nearly twenty years since she had heard that tone from him. She was frightened.

"Did you ask what was going on in the House?" he sighed. "Well, I can tell you." He put his hands on the chimneypiece and looked down at the fender. "There's going on there," he said decidedly, "as crass,

imbecile and hypocritical a piece of futility as God permits: as Almighty God permits!"

"Oh Charles!" she cried, "Charles! Is there any trouble?"

"No," he said, looking round at her with mild surprise, "just the usual thing. Nobody has the slightest idea what they're talking about, and nobody cares."

"Charles!" she said, feeling the gravity of the moment, for he was evidently suffering in some mysterious way. "Have you left it all right in your room? Haven't you any appointments or anything?"

"I never thought of that," he answered. His eyes had in them an expression quite childlike, and he said suddenly: "One can still see what you were like when I married you, Maria. Turn your face round a little."

She did so, with her face full of colour.

"Yes," he said, "they keep their profiles best. You can remember them by their profiles."

"Charles darling," said Lady Repton getting up, her white hair shining against the flush of her forehead, "Let me look after you." She had not used such a tone nor dreamed of such an endearment for many, many years.

"I don't mind, old girl," he said, "I don't mind," and the innocence of his eyes continued. Then as though something else were battling within him he began abruptly: "Maria, have you got a full list of the people who are coming to-night? I thought not. I'm sorry to have to speak of it again. I told you when we first came to town, and I've told you fifty times since, that I can do nothing without such a list."

"But I've got it," she said, in great suffering, "I've got it, Charles."

His eyes changed again. "You've got what?"

"The list of the people who are coming, Charles."

"Oh . . . I didn't understand. The list of the people who are coming," he repeated slowly. "Well, show it to me in a moment." He moved towards the door.

"I'll come with you," she said.

For the first time since her husband had decided to enter Parliament and had entered it, twenty years before, while their child was still alive, Lady Repton had to take a decision of importance. She decided in favour of the dinner. It was too late to change it, and she must trust to chance, but evidently some terrible thing had befallen the Warden of the Court of Dowry.

As he was dressing she heard him now and then humming a chance tune (a thing which in his normal self he would no more have dreamed of doing than of walking the streets without his hat) and now and then commenting upon the character and attributes of the opera singer whom he had last heard sing it. She heard him launch out into a long monologue, describing the exact career of the new soprano at Covent Garden, the name of her father and her mother, the name of the Russian Grand Duke, the name of a wealthy English lady who had asked her (and him) to supper, and then, oh horror! the name of an English statesman. There was a burst of laughter which Lady Repton could hardly bear: and then a silence.

When they met again and their guests had begun to come he seemed right enough, except that now and then he would say things which every one in the room knew well enough to be true, but which were by no means suitable to the occasion.

It was thought eccentric in him, especially by those who knew him best, that he should comment somewhat upon what man was paired off with what woman in the procession, and it was thought exceedingly coarse by his partner that he should explain a strong itching upon his right ankle to be due, not to a flea, for his man was most careful, but to some little skin trouble.

The noise of talking during the dinner covered any other indiscretions, and when the men were alone with him over the wine, he sat gloomily enough, evidently

changed but guilty of nothing more exceptional than a complete ignorance of where the wine came from or what it was.

There were the beginnings of a quarrel with a pompous and little-known fellow-member of his own party who attempted to talk learnedly on wine. Repton had begun, "What on earth d'you know about wine? Why, your old father wouldn't allow you swipes when you went to fetch the supper beer!" He had begun thus, I say, to recall the humble origins of the politician, when he added: "But there, what's the good of quarreling? You're all the same herd,"—his evident illness excused him. He led them back to the women, a gloomy troupe; they began to leave uncommonly early.

The one who lingered last was a very honest man, stupid, straightforward and rich. He was fond of Charles Repton, simply because Repton had once done him a very cheap good turn in the matter of a legal dispute; he had stopped a lawsuit. And this man ever since—it was now five years ago,—was ready to serve that household. His name, I should add, was Withers, and he was a Commoner; he sat for Ashington. He had not only this loyal feeling for Charles Repton, which he was perhaps the only man in London to feel; he had also a simple admiration for him, for his career, for his speeches, for his power of introducing impromptu such words as "well," and "now" and "I will beg the House to observe" into his careful arguments. Lady Repton trusted him, and she was glad to see him remaining alone after the others had left. Charles Repton was sitting at the end of the room, staring at nothingness.

Withers whispered to Lady Repton a rapid query as to what had happened. She could tell him nothing, but her eyes filled with tears.

"Wouldn't it be better," said Withers hurriedly, in a low tone, "if I got him back to vote to-night? There'll

be three divisions at eleven. There's bound to be a scandal if he doesn't turn up."

"Yes—no—very well," said Lady Repton. "I don't understand it. I don't understand anything." She almost broke down.

"Repton," said Withers, "won't you come along with me? It's half-past ten, there'll be three divisions."

Repton startled them both nearly out of their skins. "Divisions?" he shrieked, jumping up. "Go down and maunder past those green boxes in a great stifling pack for nothing at all? Not if I know it! Why I can guess you the majority from here. And if there wasn't any majority I should blasted well like to know the difference it would make! Divisions! Oh chase me!" And he snorted and sat down again.

Withers did not know whether to stay or to go, but before he could reply Charles Repton in the most ordinary of tones went on: "I can't understand a man like you, Withers, putting up with it. You're rich, you're a gentleman born, which I'm not; you'd be just as big a man in Buckinghamshire, especially nowadays when the county's crawling with Jews, if you were out of the House. You'd be infinitely freer. You know perfectly well the country'll stagger along without the silly tom-fool business or with it, and that neither it nor anything else can prevent the smash. Why don't you go and live your life of a squire like a sensible chap? And make one prayer that you may die before the whole bag of tricks comes to an end?"

"Come along, Charles," said Withers smoothly, "do come along.

"Not I!" said Repton, "I'm going to bed. I'm tired and my head hurts me!" And he went out like a boor.

"Lady Repton," said Withers very gently when he had gone, "what has Charles got to do to-morrow?"

"He never tells me," said the wretched lady. "I suppose he will go into the City as usual."

"It's very unwise," said Withers, "and yet I don't know after all. It might help him to be in harness, and you'll have him out of the house while you're making your plans. I'll do what I can, Lady Repton, I'll do what I can. Isn't to-morrow the meeting of the Van Diemens Company?"

"I can't tell," said Lady Repton despairingly. She was impatient to be seeing to her husband. She had grown terrified during the last few hours when he was out of her sight.

"Yes, it is," said Withers. "Oh that'll be all right. It'll do him all the good in the world: I'm sure it will. Good-night."

He came back again. He remembered something: "Of course," he said a little awkwardly, "I don't know anything about these things, but I read in the paper that he was down to speak at the big Wycliffite meeting. Don't let him go there, Lady Repton, until you're quite certain, will you?"

"Oh no," she said with the terrified look coming back again upon her face.

"It's not like business," said Withers. "There'd be excitement, you know. Good-night." And he went out.

Those of Charles Repton's guests who were Members of the House of Commons had returned to it. One or two of them had hinted that things were a little queer with Repton, but Withers, when he got back just in time for the divisions, found no rumours as yet, and was profoundly grateful. One man only who had been present at the dinner, took him aside in the Lobby and asked him whether Charles Repton had had any trouble.

Withers laughed the question away, and explained that he had known Repton for many years and that

now and then he did give way to these silly fits of temper. It was digestion, he said; perhaps the guest had noticed there were no onions.

The House had something better to gossip about, for after the divisions Demaine was seen going arm in arm with the Prime Minister into his room for a moment. There had been plenty of talk of Demaine lately: that visit increased it.

. . . . . .

Certain members more curious or fussy than the rest scoured the journalists in the lobbies: they had news.

It was all settled. The paragraphs had been sent round to the papers. The Lobby correspondents had each of them quite special and peculiar means of knowing that Certain Changes were expected in the Cabinet in the near future; that the House of Lords was to be strengthened by the addition of talents which were universally respected; several names had been mentioned for the vacancy; perhaps Mr. Demaine, with his special training and the experience drawn from his travels would, on the whole, form the most popular appointment.

Thus had the announcement been given in its vaguest form by the Prime Minister's secretary; two or three favoured journals had been permitted to say without doubt that Charles Repton had resigned; the exact title under which he would accept a peerage was suggested, and Demaine was put down in black and white as being certainly his successor.

All this Demaine was told meanwhile that evening in the Prime Minister's room.

His interview with Sorrel had been exceedingly satisfactory, and never in his life, not in the moments when he could spend most of his father-in-law's money, had Demaine experienced so complete a respect and so eager a service. He felt himself already Warden, and what was better, he felt himself perfectly capable of the Warden-

ship. His mood rose and rose. He forgot Sudie; he had not even told her when he would be home. He shook his cousin's hand as warmly as might a provincial, and went out by the entry under Big Ben, to calm down the exuberance of his joy with breaths of the fresh night air along the Embankment. It was nearly twelve o'clock.

So ended for George Mulross Demaine that Monday, June 1st, 1915.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Sir Charles Repton woke upon the Tuesday morning he felt better than he had felt at any moment since the loss of his youth. There seemed something easy in the air about him, and within his mind a lack of business and friction which he did not account for at the time, but which perhaps in a vague manner he may have ascribed to the purity of the air and the beauty of the day.

The sun was streaming into his windows from over the Park. It was already warm, and as he dressed and shaved himself he allowed his thoughts to wander with an unaccustomed freedom over the simple things of life. He noted the colour of the trees; he was glad to see the happiness of the passers-by in the streets below; he felt an unaccountable sympathy with the human race, and he was even touched with contempt as he gazed at the long procession of wealthy houses which marked the line of Park Lane.

At breakfast he ate heartily, though he was alone; he looked at the small batch of letters which awaited him, and when he opened his newspaper he positively laughed at the opinions expressed in the leading article. He nearly broke into another laugh as he read the news from America, and then—with a gesture which horrified the two solemn servants who had watched the unaccountable change in their master's manner, he tore the paper rapidly into four pieces and threw it on the floor. Having done this he jumped up gaily, nodded to the menials, said "You didn't expect that," walked briskly out,

took his hat and coat and with no conscious purpose but as habit moved him jumped into a motor-bus going East.

The conductor, who had a respect for Sir Charles Repton's clothes, and especially for his spats, and who seemed to recognise his face, asked him gently how much he desired to spend upon a ticket : to which he answered in a breezy manner, " Penny of course. Never pay more than a penny ; then if the beastly thing breaks down you're not out of pocket . . . 'sides which," he went on as though talking to himself, " if they forget about you you can have tuppence-worth or thruppence-worth for the same money ! " And he chuckled.

The conductor looked at him first in terror, then smiled responsively and went forward to deal with less fortunate people, while Sir Charles hummed gently to himself—a little out of tune but none the less cheerfully on that account—an air of ribald associations.

The top of the bus was pretty full, and a workman who had occasion to travel in the same direction as his betters saw fit to sit down in the one empty place beside the Baronet. It would have been difficult to decide upon what occupation this honest man had most recently been engaged : but there had certainly entered into it oil, wet clay, probably soot, and considerable masses of oxidised copper. It was not remarkable, therefore, that, beside such a companion, especially as that companion was a large man, Sir Charles should have found himself considerably incommoded. What *was* remarkable was the manner in which the Baronet expressed his annoyance. He turned round upon the workman with an irritated frown and said :

" I can't make out why they allow people like you on omnibuses ! "

" Yer carn't wort ? " said the breadwinner in a threatening voice.

" I say I · can't · make · out," answered Sir Charles, carefully picking out each word—" I · can't · make · out ·

why · they · allow · people · like · you on omnibuses,—dirty *brutes* like you, I should say. Why the devil . . ."

At this moment the workman seized Sir Charles by the collar. Sir Charles, though an older man, was by no means weak; his tall body was well-knit and active, and he felt unaccountably brawny that morning; he got the thumb and forefinger of his left hand like a pitchfork under his opponent's chin, and there began what promised to be a very pretty scuffle. Everybody on the top of the bus got up, a woman tittered, and a large consequential fellow who attempted to interfere received a violent backhander from the huge left hand of the Operative, the wrist of which was firmly grasped by the right of the Politician and was struggling in the air.

The bus stopped, a crowd gathered, the workman, as is customary with hard-working people, was easily appeased; Sir Charles, a good deal ruffled, got off the bus, and pressing two shillings into the hand of a policeman who was preparing to take notes, said loudly:

"That's all right! You can't do anything against *me*, and of course I can prevent the thing getting into the papers; but it's always better to give a policeman money, —safe rule!"

With that he wormed his way through the increasing mob and disappeared into a taxi, the driver of which, with singular sagacity, drove off rapidly without asking for any direction. When he was well out of it, Repton put his head out of the window and addressed the driver in the following remarkable words:

"I don't really know where you'd better go: of course if you go to my Club I could change there" (his collar was torn off him and his hat was badly battered) "but on the whole you'd better take me to Guy's—No you hadn't, go to the Club. Stop at a Boy Messenger's on your way."

"What Club, sir?" asked the driver with the deference due to a man at once wealthy and mad.

"You won't know it," said Sir Charles kindly and

still craning in a constrained manner out of the window. "By the way, why don't they have a speaking-tube or something from inside to you people? It's awkward turning one's head outside like a snake. You won't know it, but I'll shout to you when we get to the bottom of St. James's Street."

The driver, now convinced that he had to do with something quite out of the ordinary, touched his cap in a manner almost military, and fled through the streets of London. At a Boy Messenger's office Sir Charles sent home for clothes and for a change, got to his Club, informed the astonished porter that it was a very fine day, that he had just had a fight on the top of a bus, that by God the Johnnie didn't know who he was tackling! He, Sir Charles, was no longer a young man, but he would have shown him what an upper cut was if he could have got a free swing! He proceeded to illustrate the nature of this fence—then suddenly asked for his letters, and for a dressing-room.

After this, which had all been acted in the most rapid and violent manner, he ran up the steps, stood for a few moments with his hands in his pockets gazing at the telegrams, and forgetful that he had no collar on, that his coat was torn, that there was blood upon his hands, and that half of his waistcoat was wide open with two buttons missing. He found the telegrams of some interest; he did not notice the glances directed towards him by those who passed in and out of the building, nor the act of a page who in passing the porter's box tapped his forehead twice with his forefinger.

He stood for a moment in thought, then it suddenly occurred to him that it would have been a wiser thing to have gone straight home. He got another taxi and drove to his house. There, after a brief scene with the footman in which he rehearsed all that he had already given them at the Club, he ordered his clothes to be put out for him, and took a very comfortable bath.

Luckily for him he found lying upon his table when he came down, a note which he had left there the night before with regard to the Van Diemens meeting.

"Forgot that," he said, a little seriously. "Good thing I found it."

He picked it up, folded it once or twice, unfolded it, re-read it perhaps three times, and while he was so employed heard the grave voice of his secretary begging him to go into town in the motor.

Repton did not for the moment see any connection between his recent adventures and this request, but he was all compliance, and nodding cheerfully he waited for the machine to come round. When it had come he looked at it closely for a moment, confided to the chauffeur that he intensely disliked its colour, but that it was a bargain and he wasn't going to spend any money on changing it, because he meant to sell it to some fool at the end of the season—got in, and was driven to the Cannon Street Hotel.

He was a little late. The platform was already occupied and his empty chair was waiting for him.

At his entry there was some applause, such as would naturally greet the man who was known to be the Directing Brain of all that interest. None noticed a change in him. His clothes were perhaps a little less spick and span: it was unusual to see him stretch his arms two or three times before he sat down, and those who knew him best, in his immediate neighbourhood upon the platform, were astonished to see him smile and nod familiarly to several of the less important Directors; but on the whole he behaved himself in a fairly consecutive manner, and if he did whisper to a colleague upon his right that he looked as though he had been drinking a little too much overnight, the unaccustomed jest was allowed to pass without comment.

When the moment came for him to speak, he jumped up, perhaps a little too briskly, faced his audience with

less than his usual solemnity, nay, with something very like a grin, and struck the first note of his great speech in a manner which they had hitherto never heard from his lips.

It was certainly calculated to compel their attention, if not their conviction, for the very first words which he shouted into the body of the hall, were these :

" WHAT ARE WE HERE FOR ?"

After that rhetorical question, delivered in a roar that would have filled the largest railway station in London, he repeated it in a somewhat lower tone, clenched his fists, struck them squarely on the table, and answered as though he were delivering a final judgment :

" MONEY ! . . . . . .

Ladies and gentlemen," he went on, raising his right hand and wagging his forefinger at them— " we are here for money ! And don't you forget it ! "

He blew a great breath, watched them quizzically a moment, and then continued :

" What *most* of you *most* lack is the power of thinking clearly. I can see it in your faces. I can see it in the way you sit. And people who can't think clearly don't make *money*. No one can think clearly who hasn't got a good grip of his first principles and doesn't know first of all what he wants before he tries to get it. Well, I repeat it, and I challenge any one to deny it : what we want is *money !* Let us make that quite clear. Let us anchor ourselves to that . . . and when we once have that thoroughly fixed in our minds we can go on to the matter of how we are to get it."

' Now ladies and gentlemen," he proceeded in a more conversational manner, rubbing his hands together, and smiling at them with excessive freedom, " let us first of all take stock. Sitting here before me and round me here upon thus platform (he waved his right arm in a large gesture) are four million pounds of Van Diemens stock. Four million pounds, ladies and gentlemen ! But wait

a moment. At what price was that stock bought? I am not asking at what price *I* bought," —here he looked to the left and the right, sweeping the hundreds of faces before him—" I am not asking at what price *I* bought: my position differs from yours, my hearties; I'm in the middle of things and my official position obtains me even more knowledge than I should gather with my own very excellent powers of observation: I've spent a whole lifetime in watching markets, and I have never cared a *dump*—I repeat, ladies and gentlemen, a DUMP, for anything except the profit. I have never listened to any talk about the 'development of a country' or 'possibilities' or 'the future,' or any kid of that sort. I've bought paper and sold paper . . . and I've done uncommonly well out of it."

He paused a moment, more for breath than for anything else, for he had been speaking very rapidly; and in the terrified silence round him Bingham was heard muttering as though in reply to some whispered question: " You leave him *alone!* It may be unconventional, but . . ."

" The question is, ladies and gentlemen, at what price have you bought . . . on the average? Many of you are country parsons, many of you ladies with far more money than you have knowledge what to do with it. Not a few of you stock-brokers—an exceptionally inexperienced class of men—you are a fair average lot of British investors, and I ask *at what price did you buy?*" He looked at them fixedly for a few moments, then pulling out a scrap of paper he read it briefly:

" 'From figures that have been laid before me I find that the average price at which the present shareholders bough was eight pounds sixteen shillings and a few pence,'" and then added " We'll call it eight pounds. Always be on the Conservative side."

At this remark, which was supposed to contain a

political jest, two old ladies in the second row tittered, but finding themselves alone, stopped tittering.

"I say take it at eight pounds. Well, that four million of stock stands for thirty-two million pounds. *Thirty-two million pounds!*" he said with a rising voice—"THIRTY-TWO MILLION POUNDS!" he roared,—banging the table with his fist and leaning forward with a determined jowl. . . . "And what's left of it? *Nothing!*"

There was another dead silence at the end of this striking phrase, and Bingham was again heard to mutter "You leave him *alone:* he knows what he's at!" A certain uneasy shuffling of feet behind him caused Repton to turn his head snappishly, then he looked round again and resumed his great oration.

"I say *nothing*.... Oh! I know there are some of you stupid enough to think that you have still got sixteen and thruppence a share. That was the quotation in the paper this morning. Eugh!" he sniffed sardonically, "You try and *sell* at that and you'll soon find what you've got! No! you haven't even got that sixteen and thruppence. You haven't got two shillings in the pound for what you put in. You've got nothing! nothing! nothing!! Put that in your pipes and smoke it. . ."

"And so, gentlemen," he added, leaning his body backwards and putting his thumbs into his waistcoat, "the business before us is how to get out of this hole. There are perhaps some of you," he went on, frowning intellectually, "there are perhaps some of you who imagine that the Government is going to buy. Well, I'm a member of the Government, and I can tell you they are *not.*"

At this appalling remark the elements of revolution upon the platform all but exploded, but the solid weight of Bingham was still there, and if I may hint at a phrase with which the reader is already familiar, he suggested that Sir Charles knew what he was about and should be let *alone.*

"Even if they did buy," Repton went on seriously and argumentatively, "they could hardly buy at more than par. I'm the last man," he continued rapidly, "to jaw about public opinion or things of that sort. The real reason why they won't buy is the Irish. But even if they did buy they could hardly give more than par. And what's par?" he said with great disdain. "No, that cock won't fight! . . . Mind you, I'm not saying you couldn't have got the Government to buy a little time ago. I think you could. But you can't now."

"I don't think there's a single man on either front bench—" this was said meditatively and tapping off the fingers of one hand with the forefinger of the other —"who's personally interested, and I don't *think* there's any direct connection since Cooke died between the Cabinet and any one who is—except me. No, that's not the way out. What you've got to do, ladies and gentlemen, is to throw a sprat to catch a whale."

"A sprat," he meditatively repeated, "to catch a whale: a great Whale full o' blubber! . . . an' how are you going to do that?"

"Now listen"—his tone had become very earnest and he was leaning forward, bent and fixed and holding them with his fine strong eyes, "listen, there are three steps. You've got first of all to show the public that you *believe* in the future of the Company; next you've got to decide upon a dodge to show that: something that'll make every one think that you the shareholders do really believe in that future. What's the third step? Why up goes the price—real price—money offered—*then you can sell.* That's my opinion," he concluded, clapping his hands together and laying them upon the table before him; and he let it sink in.

"Now you'll notice," he went on, "in the prospectus you have received, some talk of a railway. We're asking money from you to build a railway. Now why are we doing that? Please follow me carefully."

The hundreds of heads bent forward and the intelligencies they contained were prepared to follow him carefully. He was a great man.

"We have asked you to build a railway," he pronounced, leaving a little space of time between each word, "because a railway still catches on. I don't know why, but it *does*. Mines don't. You might discover ore all over the place and they wouldn't go; I've got two men of my own, engineers, *experts*, who'll discover ore anywhere; they'd discover tons before three o'clock this afternoon and you might swear your dying oath to them, but the public wouldn't believe you. As for agriculture, —Piff! And as for climate, Boo! But *railways* still work."

"Very well. You raise your capital for your railway. What that railway may be imagined to do is set out in full before you and I won't go into it. But I will ask you especially to note the passage in which it is described as giving a strategical supremacy to the Empire. You know what the Empire is. You *may* know, some o' you, what strategy is. Looks as if there were a fleecy general or two among you! But that's as may be—just note the phrase. It's safety! That's what it is! No odds. No blighter to run any risk of having to fight any one anywhere! Grand!" . . . "I *think* also," he mused, "something could be done with the tourist side . . . there are falls and mountains and things . . . but no matter: the point is the railway."

He drank from a glass of water on the table, turned round angrily and said: "Good lord what water! It's bad enough to have to drink water in public for a show, but it needn't be tepid! If the place wasn't so public I'd spit it out again!" Then facing the audience again: "However . . . About that railway. First understand clearly, ladies and gentlemen, *that railway is not going to be built!* There is no intention of building it. There is no intention of surveying it."

Two or three voices rose in protest at the back of the hall. Sir Charles leaned forward and put out his hand appealingly :—

"One moment, one moment pray! Hear me out! I don't mean that no one will build it. That's not our funeral. I mean that *we* won't. The 'Company' may, whatever that means. But you and I—the people who have got into this hole—*we* won't. It won't be *our* money. Seize that! Get a hold of that! It's the key to the whole business."

Little gasps and one profound sigh, but no interruptions followed this explanation, and Sir Charles with perfect coolness continued :

"What we want is five shillings a share—only five shillings a share. Five shillings where most of you have already given a hundred and sixty! Five shillings a share . . . four million shares . . . that's a million. And mind you, only a nominal million. We don't want your two half-crowns ; bless you no. All we want in cash is a shilling. For the rest, you'll see in a moment. Well, there you are then, a shilling, a miserable shilling. Now just see what that shilling will do!"

"In the first place it'll give publicity and plenty of it. Breath of public life, publicity! Breath o' finance too! We'll have that railway marked in a dotted line on the maps : all the maps : school maps : office maps. We'll have leaders on it and speeches on it. And good hearty attacks on it. And th-e-n . . ." He lowered his voice to a very confidential wheedle,—"the price 'll begin to creep up—Oh . . o . . . oh! the *real* price, my beloved fellow-shareholders, the price at which one can really *sell*, the price at which one can handle the *stuff*."

He gave a great breath of satisfaction. "Now d'ye see? It'll go to forty shillings right off, it ought to go to forty-five, it may go to sixty! . . . And then," he said briskly, suddenly changing his tone, "then, my hearties, you blasted well sell out : you unload . . . you dump

'em. Plenty more fools where your lot came from. I won't advise,—sell out just when you see fit. Every man for himself, and every woman too," he said, bowing politely to the two old ladies in the second row,—" and the devil take the hindmost. But you'll all have something, you'll none of you lose it all as it looked like last week. Most of you 'll lose on your first price: late comers least: a few o' ye 'll make if you bought under two pounds. Anyhow *I* shall. . . There! if that isn't finance I don't know what is!"

And with a large happy, final, satisfactory and conclusive smile, the Builder of Empire, to the astonishment of every one, looked at his watch, called upon his Creator as a witness to the lateness of the hour, and suddenly went out.

It would be delicious to describe what happened in the vast body of that hall when the Chief had left it: how the shareholders made a noise like angry bees swarming: how a curate who had done no man any harm was squashed against a wall and broke two ribs; how five or six excited and almost tearful men surrounded the reporters and fought for their notebooks; how Bingham continued to reiterate that Charles Repton knew what he was at; and how a certain quiet little man with a bronzed face and very humorous eyes, slunk out and got rid of his block of shares within the hour, to a young hearty Colonial gentleman who was wealthy and had come to London to learn the business ways of our City.*

But I must follow Sir Charles in his rapid drive to the House of Commons. I must mention his unconventional remark to the policeman to the effect that he hoped that old fool Pottle hadn't come in yet; and his taking his place on the front bench just after prayers with a look so merry and free that it illumined the faces opposite like a sun.

The questions to which he had to reply came some-

* He did.

what late on the paper, and he caused not a little scandal by suggesting in a low tone such answers to his colleagues for *their* questions as seemed to him at once humorous and apposite.

The aged Home Secretary especially afforded him fine sport, and when a question was asked with regard to the new Admiralty docks at Bosham, he went to the length of chucking a cocked-hat note to the principal contractor who sat solemnly upon the benches behind him, nodding cheerfully over his shoulder and whispering loudly: "It's all up!"

All this boded ill for what might happen when his own turn came; and indeed the scene that followed was of a kind entirely novel in the long history of the House of Commons.

It was a simple question; Question 63. Not ten minutes of question-time were left when it was asked. It was put by a gentle little man who had put it down for the sake of a friend who lived on the South Coast, and it was simply to ask the right honourable Baronet, the Warden of the Court of Dowry, whether his attention had been called to the presence upon the Royal Sovereign shoals of a wreck which endangered navigation, and what he intended to do in the matter.

Charles Repton jumped up like a bird; he jovially and rapidly read the typewriten answer which his permanent officials had given him—to the effect that he had nothing to add to the reply given three years before with regard to the same wreck, which was then, they were careful to point out, far more dangerous than at the present day.

But when he had finished reading the official reply, he looked up genially at his interlocutor and said:

"We don't want to interfere with that wreck: it's full of gin!"

An angry fanatic hearing the word "gin" rose at once and put the supplementary question: "May I

ask whether that gin was destined for the unfortunate natives of the Lagos Hinterland ?"

"Yes," said the Warden of the Court of Dowry politely, "Yes, sir, you may : but they will never get it. However, several thousand tons of gin, I am glad to say, have gone out to the negroes of our colonies since the ship was lost, to the no small advantage," he added, "of my friend Mr. Garey ; whom, by the way," he continued with conversational ease, "we all hope to see in this House shortly, for old Southwick who's up against him hasn't got a dog's chance, and you probably know that we are forcing Pipps to resign. Bound to be an election !"

He sat down. It was a quarter to four, and the House was saved. But though the decorum of that great assembly prevented one word from being uttered as to what had passed, the Lobbies were full of it, and when the first division was taken men who ordinarily filed past the Treasury bench avoided it, while from distant and dark corners where one cannot be observed, long and intent looks were darted at the happy Warden of the Court of Dowry.

He sat there gay and quite unconscious of the effect he had produced, passed with his Party into the Lobbies for the division, greeting with familiar joy men who appeared rather anxious to avoid his eye, and making, I regret to say, such unseemly jests upon the Party system as had never been heard within those walls before.

The young Prime Minister, though suffering so considerably from the left lung, was never at a loss where tact, and especially tact combined with rapid action, was necessary. A horrified servant called him from his room and described what was passing. He did not stop to ask why or how the thing had happened. He came in rapidly through the door behind the Speaker's chair, and beckoned to Sir Charles Repton, who was at that moment occupied in drawing a large caricature of

the Leader of the Opposition, with his hands deep into the pocket of an amiable farmer-like gentleman in top-boots and whiskers, who made a presentable image of John Bull.

Charles Repton got up at once and went out to his Chief. "What d'you think of this?" he said showing his picture.

The young Prime Minister smiled as death would smile. "It's very good, it's very good," he said hurriedly. "Have it coloured . . . colour it yourself. Oh, do what you like with it . . . Come with me. Come into my room, do. No, I'll tell you what, I want to speak to you. Let's get out into the air."

He walked his subordinate away rapidly arm in arm across Parliament Square towards St. James's Park, talking about a thousand things and never giving Repton time for a word. Then he said suddenly: "What I really want to say to you, Repton, is . . ." He abruptly broke off. "Is Lady Repton at home?"

"Yes," said Repton a little puzzled, "or she will be by this time. I make her show me her plan for the afternoon at lunch, and she's got to suit me, or there's a row."

"Well now," said the Prime Minister, "will you do me a great favour?" He put his hand on Repton's shoulder and looked candidly into his eyes.

"Certainly my dear fellow," answered the Warden of the Court of Dowry in the utmost good humour. "After all my position depends upon you, and a good deal of my income depends upon my position. It isn't likely I should put your back up even if I didn't like you, which is far from being the case, though I must say I don't think you're a man of very exceptional talent. I think you owe most of your position to birth."

"Yes, yes," said the Prime Minister hurriedly, "I understand. Now what I want you to do is this: jump into the first thing you see and *go straight home.* You

will see why when you get there. It's absolutely urgent. Will you ? "

" Certainly," said Repton more puzzled than ever. " All you politicians are such liars that I make a point of believing the exact opposite of what you say : but if you tell me it's of any service to you, it certainly does *me* no harm." And whistling gaily he walked off towards a cab that was meandering across the Parade.

When the Prime Minister had seen him well off he went as rapidly as dignity would allow into Downing Street, took the telephone from his secretary and in an agony of apprehension lest he should be too late, at last heard Lady Repton's voice. He told her that her husband was the victim of a most distressing malady ; she would understand it when she saw him. He implored her to save so valuable a man for the country by managing in some way or other to confine him to the house until he should be medically examined.

It was a great relief to the young fellow to have got this duty done. His fifty-four years seemed to weigh less upon him : for the ten minutes between leaving the House and seeing Repton off he had been on a grill : there was still ridicule to be faced, but he had a sentiment of having achieved his end and of having just saved as difficult a situation as ever the chief of a State had had to meet.

. . . . . .

It was an anxious moment, but many moments are necessarily anxious in the life of a man who holds in his hands the destinies of Great Britain, and the young and popular Prime Minister had the stuff in him to stand worse scenes than that, but he was exhausted and he was slightly troubled. The full consequences of the dreadful affair had not yet shaped themselves in his mind.

He walked back to his room in the House of Commons, ruminating during those few steps upon the developments

that might arise from Repton's terrible accident, and beginning to plan how he should arrange matters with Demaine. It would want caution, for Demaine was slow to understand . . . but then there was a corresponding advantage to that, for like all slow men, Dimmy could hold his tongue. . . . In fact he couldn't help it.

The Prime Minister was pleased to think that he had that second string to his bow, and that opinion had been sufficiently prepared for the change. Repton would be certified of course, the sooner the better,—that would prevent any necessity for a peerage. Demaine's taking the place would seem more natural, and those gadflies, the *Moon* and the *Capon*, would not fall into a fever about the appointment. . . . Perhaps after all the Repton business would be an advantage in the long run!

The more he thought of his choice of Demaine the more pleased he was, and he had almost persuaded himself that the appointment was due to some extreme cunning upon his own part, when, coming round from his room into the Lobbies, he casually asked a colleague where Demaine was at the moment.

The colleague didn't know. "I have my back turned to the benches behind us you know," he explained elaborately.

The Prime Minister cast upon him a look of contempt, and asked the doorkeeper whether he had seen Mr. Demaine.

"G. M. Demaine," said the doorkeeper solemnly, running his finger down a list.

The Prime Minister was almost moved to reprove him, but dignity forbade.

"Not in the House!" said the man curtly, addressing as an equal the chief power in England; for his post was secure, the Prime Minister's precarious.

"You mean not on the benches: I can see that for myself!" said the Prime Minister sharply.

"I mean he hasn't passed this door, sir," said the

official with quiet dignity, and Dolly went off considerably nettled, and looked into the tea-room and the libraries, and even wasted a little time in going round by the smoking-room. The policeman in the central hall had not seen Demaine, nay, a constituent with an exceedingly long black moustache and fierce eyes had been waiting by appointment with Demaine for two hours, and Demaine had not been found. The Prime Minister condescended so much as to speak to this man, and the man, not knowing whom he might be addressing, told him plainly that "if Mr. Demaine interpreted his duties in this fashion, he couldn't answer for his seat, that was all!"

The Prime Minister further condescended to go out of the House in the ordinary way, and the policeman who guarded the ordinary portal had not seen Mr. Demaine.

It was really very awkward and exasperating, though it was only a detail. He must see Demaine that afternoon: it was imperative. But it was also important that he should see him as soon as possible. He wanted to keep him out of the way till he was coached.

There is nothing in this happy English life of ours more soothing to the brain in moments of anxiety, than the perusal of any one of those great Organs of Opinion which are the characteristic of our people and the envy of Europe, and of these it must be admitted none stand on quite the same intellectual and moral plane as the best two or three of our London evening papers. One of these the Prime Minister had always found particularly soothing. He bought it of the newsman at the corner of Parliament Square and opened it as he walked along at leisure towards Downing Street.

There was one corner of this sheet which was always a recreation to Dolly in the few moments he could spare from the House: it was the corner in which prizes were offered for the best pun, on condition of course that nothing coarse or personally offensive should be sent in

by the competitors. To this he had turned an indifferent eye, when for the second time that day he received a shock which was almost like a blow in the face. . . .

There, in great letters, with a flamboyance surely unworthy of a paper that professed to support his own Party, was the headline :

"DISAPPEARANCE OF A MINISTER ELECT."

And his forebodings did not deceive him. . . . It was . . . it was . . . the permanently unlucky Demaine !

He cursed the crass imbecility by which such a thing could have got into the papers at all. He strode to his house and to his room, crumpled the paper which he was still holding, unfolded it, and then read the news again. There were but a few lines of it : Demaine had disappeared, and the full detective power of London was attempting to solve the mystery of his disappearance.

What madness to let such things get out !

Why, twenty things might have happened ! He might simply have stopped in the house of a friend and not bothered to tell his wife that he was not coming home ; he might simply have fallen ill and have been taken to a hospital or to a hotel. What a piece of idiocy to put it into the Press at all !

Much as he hated the exercise, he rang to be put through to Demaine House, and heard from Sudie herself, whom he knew but distantly, that her fears had done all.

She had sat up for George till nearly five o'clock in the morning : underrating perhaps her husband's talents, and notably his ability to find his way home, she thought it possible he had fallen a victim to an unscrupulous taxi driver or that any one of a thousand other fates might have befallen him.

With too little comprehension of the social forces that build up the society of the Mother Land, Sudie had communicated at once with Scotland Yard, and on learning that her husband had last been seen leaving the

House of Commons and walking towards the river, she had taken the unpardonable step of sending messages to all the evening papers in the hope that such publicity would advance the solution of the mystery.

It was perfectly damnable! As though the cares of his office were not enough, the Prime Minister found himself upon this Tuesday afternoon with a doubtful and anxious division awaiting him in the evening, with one of his Ministers gone mad, and his successor the subject at the best of a vulgar mystery, and at the worst of a hopeless disappearance.

CHAPTER X.

THE phrase "intoxicated with pleasure," too common in our literature, would most inexactly describe the condition of George Mulross Demaine as he left the Prime Minister's room upon that Monday midnight.

In the first place he was not and never had been intoxicated, and even when he exceeded (as in youth he frequently had) in the matter of wine, spirits, liqueurs and fancy liquids, the effect of such excess had rather been atrophy than intoxication. Nor had he ever felt what poets finely call the "sting of joy."

But he was pleased: he was very pleased. Thoughts that in another more volatile and less substantial brain might have crowded, appeared slowly separated one from another and in a solemn procession. They comforted rather than exhilarated him.

First of all there was the £5000 a year; that was something.

He ruminated on that about as far as Cleopatra's Needle; there, as he leant upon the parapet of the Embankment and looked down into the water, a second thought rose upon the horizon of his mind; the £5000 a year would be his, not Sudie's.

In the first stage of this nightly ramble he had barged into two men: one a poor man who had made the accident the excuse for the delivery of money; the second a rich one who cursed him abominably, but George was in too equable a mood to mind. Now, as he left Cleopatra's

Needle behind him and strolled still farther eastward, ruminating upon the fact that the £5000 a year would be his and not Sudie's, he had the misfortune to cannon against yet a third, to whom he apologised: but it was a post, not a man.

He looked at it with those slow, sensible eyes of his for perhaps thirty seconds, and saw in large red letters under the electric light "Motors to the right of this post."

He repeated the phrase mechanically as was often his wont upon reading anything, and it set up a new train of thought. Post . . . The post offered him was not permanent . . . but he considered the careers of his friends and he could remember none, neither Ted nor Johnny nor old Bill Curliss, nor Fittleworth nor Glegg, who from the moment they had received such promotion had not gone forward.

It always meant something, even when one was out of office, and then who knows? One might be in office again. A Party may be in office twice running! Stranger things had happened. And then, even if they went out of office, Ole Man Benson would have brought something off by that time.

Look at it how he would, heaven was smiling on him, and he in return, and as though in gratitude, smiled at the gaunt front of Blackfriars Station, opposite which he had now arrived.

Between him and it there lay the street, and he was naturally too cautious to attempt to cross until he had gazed carefully to the front and right. But at midnight there is no pressure of traffic in the City of London, and when he had allowed a belated dray and a steam roller to pass him at their leisure he hurriedly crossed over with a vague intention of taking the train.

Like many men of the governing classes, whose mental activities are naturally divorced from the petty details of London life, and who are independent of that daily round which makes the less fortunate only too familiar

with our means of communication, George Mulross Demaine was not quite certain where the Underground went to, nor what part of London precisely it served. But he had been taught from childhood that it was circular in form, and that round it like Old Ocean* in a perpetual race, went along streams of trains. Enter it where you would, and you might leave it somewhere upon its periphery.

He knew that St. James's Park Station was at his very door. He asked for and obtained a ticket with that promptitude which distinguishes the service of our premier Metropolitan line, left the change for sixpence by an oversight on the ledge of the ticket window, and then, as Fate would have it, turned to the left-hand stairs.

The official whose duty it was to examine and to cut designs upon the tickets presented to him by the public, was that evening (under the guidance of Fate) most negligent.

He should surely have seen that he was dealing with an Obvious Gentleman and should gently have directed him to the opposing platform. As it was he did no more than half puncture the cardboard without so much as glancing at it, and George Melross Demaine (in whom now yet another pleasing thought had arisen—that there were such things as Cabinet pensions—) sauntered down on to the platform.

A train roared in; he stumbled into it just in time to save his coat from the shutting of the gate, and sat contentedly until he should hear the conductor shout "St. James's Park!" But this cue word which would have aroused him to action, he was destined not to hear.

The Mansion House went by, and Cannon Street, but yet another pleasing thought having arisen in his mind he noted them not.

* . . . . . μέγα σθένος 'Ωκεανοῖο
Αντυγα πὰρ πυμάτην σάκεος πύκα ποιητοῖο

A shout of "Monument" startled him, for he had heard in a general way of the Monument, and it was nowhere near his home When he came to Mark Lane he was seriously alarmed, and at the cry of Aldgate East, his mind was made up. He got out.

He asked with the utmost courtesy of the man who took the tickets what he should do to get to St. James's Park, and the man who took the tickets replied with less courtesy but with great rapidity that he had better turn sharp to the right and that on his right again he would find Aldgate Station, whence there was still a service of trains, late as was the hour.

Alas, for the various locutions of various ranks in our society! he did turn sharp to the right; he went right round the corner into Middlesex Street, and to the right again into Wentworth Street, but not a station could be seen. The summer night was of a glimmering sort of darkness. It was hot, and many of the local families were still seated upon their steps, speaking to each other in a dialect of the Lithuanian Ghetto which George Mulross erroneously took for an accent native to the London poor.

He stepped up to one and asked whether he were yet near the station. The voluble reply "Shriska beth haumelshee! Chragso! Yeh!" illumined him not at all, and as he moved off uncertainly up the street, a roar of harsh laughter tended to upset his nerves.

He could not bear this raking fire: he turned, most imprudently, up a narrow court which was in total darkness; and, then at first to his surprise but almost immediately afterwards to his grave chagrin, he felt a voluminous and exceedingly foul cotton sheet drawn sharply round his throat, twisted, the slack of it thrown over his head, and one end crammed into his mouth for a gag; almost at the same moment his wrists were jerked behind him, a rope whose hardness must have been due to tar was hitched round them with surely excessive violence,

putting him to grievous pain, his feet were lifted from under him, he felt several hands grasping his head and shoulders at random, a couple of them seizing his ankles; he was reversed, and in the attitude described at the Home Office as "The Frogs' March" he felt himself carried for some few yards, and at last reversed again and placed face upwards upon a narrow and hard surface.

Through the filthy cotton which still enveloped his face, the disgusting stains of which were dimly apparent to him, he saw the glimmer of a light, and he heard round him language the accent and many of the words of which were so unfamiliar to him that he could make nothing of it. He was incommoded beyond words.

Whatever his defects, George Mulross Demaine was not lacking in physical courage; he begged them in a mumble through the gag that covered his mouth to let him go. There was no direct reply, but only a good deal of whispering, which so far as he could make it out—and much of it was foreign—related to his person rather than to his request.

An attempt to move betrayed the fact that some heavy body was seated upon his shins; another attempt to raise the upper half of his body was met by so sharp a reminder upon the side of his head that he thought it better for the moment to lie still.

What followed was an examination of his clothes and their contents, which showed his new neighbours to be unacquainted with the sartorial habits of the wealthy. The two slits in his cape were taken for pockets and their emptiness provoked among other comments the shrill curse of a woman. His trouser pockets, wherein it was fondly hoped that metal might lie hid, and wherein he would rather have died than have put anything, similarly drew blank, and to their disgust, of the two little lines on the waistcoat one was a sham and the other contained nothing but a spare stud. However, this con-

tained a small precious stone, and was the immediate object of a pretty severe scuffle.

He was next reversed yet a third time without dignity, and in a manner the violence of which was most wounding: but in his tail pocket was nothing but a large new silk handkerchief which went (apparently by custom, for there was no discussion) to the captain of the tribe.

Purse there was none, a thing that bewildered them; not even a portmonnaie, until, to their mingled astonishment and joy, some one acuter than the rest discovered in a mass of seals at his watch chain, a little globular receptacle which opened with a spring, and revealed no less than four sovereigns.

It was a poor haul, but the clothes remained. Not for long. They were all removed, and that not with roughness but, he was glad to note, tenderly: less perhaps from the respect they bore him than from a consideration of the value of the cloth. The precise manœuvre whereby the difficulty of the ankles and the wrists was eliminated, I leave to those of my readers who are better acquainted with such problems than I. There are several well-known methods, I understand, whereby a man may have his trousers and his coat removed and yet his hands and feet preserved in custody.

His boots (they were astonished to note) were elastic-sided. They were under the impression that among the wealthy buttoned boots alone were tolerated at the evening meal and thenceforward until such hours as the wealthy seek repose. But they were good mess boots, and take it all in all, his clothing, every single article of which was soon folded and put into its bundle, made the best part of their booty.

Then there was a considerable movement of feet, a murmur of voices purposely low; there seemed to be one person left, agile and rapid in movement . . . perhaps two: at any rate after these or this one had held him for some thirty seconds, during which he had the

sense and prudence to lie still, there was a sharp sliding of feet, the quick but almost noiseless shutting of a door, and he found that he was free.

His first act was to disembarass himself of his stinking head-gear, but his captors had laid their trap with science, and it was precisely this which was destined to give them the leisure for their escape. The sheet was tied to his head by a series of small hard knots which took him, between them, quite a quarter of an hour to undo.

At last he was free. He tore the filthy thing from his head and the bunch of it from his mouth with the same gesture, overcame a strong desire to vomit, and looked round him.

He found himself seated upon a sort of narrow bench attached by iron clamps to the wall of a small and exceedingly noisome room, which even at that moment he had the wit to think that he would certainly have dealt with by the local inspector when he should have assumed what he had heard called the reins of office.

But for the moment other considerations occupied him to the exclusion of the condition of the room. A dirty paraffin lamp with no shade stood on the rickety table ; the one window was blinded by a large old wooden shutter barred down against it ; on the cracked, distempered walls, stained with a generation of grease and smoke, hung a paper upon which a few figures had been scrawled roughly in pencil, and most of them scratched out again, and here and there the same pencil or others had inscribed the surface of the plaster with sentiments and illustrations most uncongenial to his breeding.

The next thing that met his eye was a peculiarly repulsive pair of breeches, an old green-black torn overcoat, and a pair of workmen's boots, cracked, grey with weather, laceless and apparently as stiff as wood. He had no choice : his first business was to find aid. He must put these on, break his way out of this den as best he could, and summon the Police.

He had never had his feet in such things as those boots before ; it was like shuffling in boxes. He hated to feel the clammy grease of the trousers and coat against his skin.

He left the lamp burning and made for the door. To his astonishment the latch was open. To his further astonishment it gave into an open passage like a tunnel, with no door but a plain arch opening into the court beyond. He shuffled out. He was glad that it was not yet day. Fortunately it was not cold.

He turned, he knew not whither, following the streets aimlessly, but more or less in one direction, until he saw in a blotted silhouette against the darkness of the walls, the glad and familiar form of a policeman. It was like coming home! It was like making a known harbour light after three days of lost reckonings and a gale.

He went up to the man and began in that pleasant but not condescending tone in which he had ever addressed members of the force :

" Policeman, can you tell me . . ."

He got no further. The agile though weighty custodian of order, with the low and determined remark, " I know yer ! " had seized him by the shoulders, whirled him round and away, so that he fell, bruised and a little dazed, against the steps of a house.

George was angered. He had already risen with some remark on his lips about taking a number when he saw his antagonist make a sharp gesture—there was a shrill whistle, immediately afterwards an answering whistle from perhaps a hundred yards away, and George Mulross Demaine,—blame him if you will,—kicked off the impossible boots and ran for it.

They let him run, and it is not for us to criticise. He left their district at any rate.

He had run for but a few moments in his absurd and horrible greatcoat and on his naked feet until he saw down the end of an alley a great gate, a light to one side

of it, and beyond it an empty space of glimmering nightly sky. Ignorant of where he was or what he did, but determined upon safety, he looked round and to his horror saw the form of yet another policeman pacing slowly towards the place where he was crouching.

That determined him. With an agility that none of his acquaintances, not even his wife, would have believed to be in him, he slunk quite close to earth in the shadow of the great gate and entered the open space beyond.

Such a space he had never seen. Under the very faint light which was now beginning to show over the east of heaven, he guessed that he was upon the river, for he saw masts against the sky and that peculiar pale glint of water which, even at night, may be distinguished between the hulls of ships. All he sought was shadow, and the great wharves of the docks—for he had blundered into the docks—give ample opportunity.

He heard a measured step pacing slowly towards him. He crept along the edge of the quay into a sort of narrow lane that lay between a row of high barrels and the bulwarks of a big steamship which just showed above the stone. He flattened himself against the high barrels which, had he been better acquainted with the details of commerce, he would have known to contain fishbone manure.

The measured tread came nearer : it passed, it reached a certain point in the distance, it turned and passed again. It reached yet another extreme of its beat, turned and re-passed. . . And all the while the light was growing : and as it grew the nervous agony of George Mulross grew with it, but more rapidly.

He could now just see the figure of the watchman near the gate, he could distinguish part of the nearer rigging ; in half an hour he would be visible to whatever eyes were watching for vagabonds. He knew what that meant ; further humiliation, perhaps further dangers. There was not a gentleman for miles,—and with that

thought the heart of this most unfortunate of gentlemen beat slow.

The reader has been sufficiently told that Mr. Demaine, however solid the quality of his brain, was not a man of rapid decision. But agony and peril are sharp spurs, and as the conception of a gentleman floated through his mind he suddenly remembered that ships had captains.

Upon their exact functions he was hazy; he would know it better no doubt when he had undertaken his functions in the Court of Dowry (the blessed thought warmed him for a moment even in that dreadful dawn!); anyhow, the word "captain" meant something . . . it wasn't like a captain in the army of course . . . but then there were captains and captains . . . of course the Royal Navy was superior to the Merchant Service . . . but it was all the same kind of thing—only upper and lower, like a barrister and a solicitor. . . . For instance there was the Naval Reserve. . . And he remembered a captain upon an Atlantic liner who was a splendid great fellow, and he was sure could tell any one at once. And the captain of Billy's schooner was better than that because he understood about motor engines.

He had just come to the point of remembering that on the P. and O. it was rather a grand thing to dine with the captain, when his mind arrived at its conclusion. He would slip over the side of the big ship, and when the proper time came he would reveal himself to the captain for what he was. The captain would show him every courtesy, he would give him a change of clothes, ready-made but decent, he would know where there was a telephone, he would have authority to speak to the watchman and the rest, he would send for a taxi, and George's troubles would be over. . . .

George prepared to slip over the side.

Now to slip over the side in a book is one thing, but to do it on a real ship is another. The bulwarks were

high and greasy and salt and slimy. Demaine was weakened by a night of terrors, and he came down on the hard iron deck of the tramp with a noise resembling distant thunder, and in a manner that hurt him very much indeed.

It was a new misadventure and one that had to be repaired. He heard voices and bolted for a large coil of rope which lay beneath the shadow of the turtle-deck. Here the stench, though somewhat different in quality from that of the fishbone manure, was not less noisome, and carried with it a reminiscence of Channel passages which weakened the very soul within George Mulross Demaine. But the sensation was soon swamped in one much more poignant ; this was aroused in him by the approach of two inharmonious voices, one of which was borne towards him perpetually clamouring :

" Yes ah deed ! "

While the other repeated as a sort of antiphon :

" Noa ee diddun, tha silly fule ! "

When this dialogue was exhausted the first voice in a lower and much more determined tone hissed : " Ah'll ave im aowt ! " and a large stave which might, for all Demaine knew, be a marling spike or some other horrid instrument, began rummaging behind the coil of rope.

" T'ould man sez ef ah doan catch next 'un ee'll skin me live ! "

To this the second voice reiterated his certitude that his companion was a silly fool, and that he had had stowaways upon the brain since he was last made responsible for the presence of one of these supercargoes upon the *Lily*.

The voices moved away and Demaine, while he breathed somewhat more freely, was back again in his former doubt and terror.

It grew to be broad day ; he heard the rattling of chains ; the presence of men upon every hand made

him but the more determined to remain in his hiding place until he could approach the Captain in some mor convenient manner than through the medium of th unfeeling and ill-educated North Countrymen who seeme to compose the crew.

He felt the great ship swinging, he could see the patc of cloud in the sky of which he had a glimpse, turnin as she turned, he felt the slight throb of her engines she was passing down the dock, she was out of the gate— she was almost in the river, when, to his horror . . . th coil of rope which had been his bulwark against an un feeling world, *began slowly to uncoil at the top*, with th motion of some great and wicked snake that was makin for its harmless prey.

Had George Mulross attained that acquaintance wit seafaring terms which is proper to an administrato of this sea-girt isle (and especially to a Warden of th Court of Dowry), he would have known that the rapidl disappearing coil before him was being used as a warpin rope, and he would have connected the steady clan of the donkey engine which accompanied its disappea ance with the absorption of fathom after fathom of wha had been kindly shelter. But even had he known thes things it is doubtful whether they would have intereste him at the moment.

He crouched lower and lower as the coil diminishe occupying the smallest space compatible with keepin his legs tucked away behind what was left of the cable but the Gods were deaf that morning to all prayer The last eighteen inches of the coil's height were reache and still the pitiless donkey engine clanked, and st the lengths went slithering away, until at last his bac appeared above the element it lived in,—the unmistakab back of a human being, clothed in a ragged green-blac coat.

To the trained and piercing eye of sailor-men th object was unmistakable, and like two cats upon o

mouse his acquaintances of an hour before pounced upon his trembling form: the sceptical one now converted and protesting that he had been convinced from the first of the stowaway's presence, the other in cruel triumph dragging him along the deck and threatening him with such consequences as not even the peculiar idiom of the North Country could completely veil.

With such energy as remained to him, George sprang up at the first opportunity they gave him. He had the sense not to run upon those crowded and confined decks. The button torn of his coat-collar in the scramble showed his bare neck and chest. Masses of grime, tar and dust streaked his face; his hair was most untidy, and his bootless feet were caked in mud.

"I want to see the captain," he said between his gasps.

"Tha wants . . . !" began his irate captor,—then plain words failed him, and he took refuge in a few oaths. The other said more quietly:

"Tha'lt see im, ladd: ow! tha'lt see im,"—and he nodded twice gravely in a manner which George would have found reassuring had he not already begun to suspect that the lower classes were capable of sarcasm.

"Tha'lt see im!" he suddenly repeated with the utmost ferocity; and catching Demaine sharply by the back of the neck he ran him into the semi-darkness under the bridge where, as luck would have it, the first officer in a somewhat surly mood was going down off duty.

I should over-weight these pages were I so much as to attempt the language of the first officer when he cast his eyes upon the unfortunate figure before him. A stowaway! It was the second time it had happened in three months.

One stammering attempt to make himself heard so dreadfully increased the power of this man's passion that George perforce was silent. The first officer's rage rose into a sort of typhoon, and had the law or even the

custom of the sea permitted him to do one quarter of that with which he threatened the poor vagabond, a British ship would certainly be no fit place to live in. As a matter of fact when his tirade was over he confined himself to a general curse upon the town of London and its inhabitants, to a particular one directed with menace against the able seaman who had captured the stowaway, and at last, with directions that he should be shown to the captain when the ship was in the fairway and the anxious business of getting her out was over.

For some little time, therefore, Demaine still stood a butt for the occasional but half-exhausted ribaldry of his two guardians, and not until the waterman's boat had dropped away from alongside and the warping rope had splashed into the slime of the Thames, not until the donkey engine had clanked once more and got it aboard, horrible with all the horrors of that water, and not until the engine was going fairly and the *Lily* dropping swiftly down the tide, was the captain ready to sit in judgment.

Captain Higgins was a man who had made method and self-control the hinges of success in life. *His* Caryll's Ganglia were all right!

Accuracy in accounts, faithfulness to employers, and strict discipline aboard, were, as he was proud of repeating, his motto. And when he heard that yet another stowaway had claimed the hospitality of the *Lily*, he betrayed no unusual perturbation but sat down at his little desk, and ordered the prisoner to be brought in.

George, somewhat hurriedly introduced by both arms between his now silent captors, perceived sitting at that table a sight very different from that which he had expected. He saw a very small, thin man with a little pointed red beard and the eyes of a weasel, wearing a well-used and somewhat dirty peaked cap, upon the front of which was embroidered a coat of arms long indistinguishable, and surrounded by a scroll of tawdry and threadbare gold braid.

This was the individual upon whom Demaine's hopes o speedy restoration depended. He was determined not to speak first, though he was certain that the superior education of the officer would pierce through his involuntary disguise.

Captain Higgins pulled out a large, official-looking paper divided into certain mysterious compartments, each headed with a printed rubric, and said briefly, without looking up, and with his pen ready to write: "Name?"

"Demaine," said George, with all the dignity he could summon. . . "But——"

"Silence!" commanded Captain Higgins sharply, still without looking up from the paper on which he scratched rapidly and in an official manner: "Mane." "First name," he chanted musingly, his pen suspended to write further.

"George Mulross," enunciated that individual, and "George Ross" went down on to the sheet.

He began once more by clearing his throat, but though he had not yet said a word, Captain Higgins looked up with such an expression in his small and unpleasing eyes as would brook no nonsense.

"George Ross Mane," said he, speaking through his nose. "You have been discovered on my ship, the *Lily*, one thousand three hundred and twenty tons burthen, London rating, bound from London to Portland with agricultural and general cargo."

Captain Higgins loved these formalities.

"I have no jew-risdiction in the matter. . . ." And here he began speaking by rote out of a dirty little book in which were laid down the elements of his trade: "Of-breach - of - contract - tort - replevin - stave - jury - or-execution - major - and - minor - nor - authority - to - act - savin' - always - and - exceptin' - in - such - way - as - and- whereby - discipline - accoutrement - good order *and* - the - fear - of - the - Lord - proper - to - the - navi-

gatin' - of - this - ship - from - her - departure - to - her - port - of - destination - is - concerned - *wherefore* - you - shall - be - fed - in - such - manner - as - shall - keep - you - livin' - until - the - next - port - or - ports - whereat - this - good - ship - may - touch - and - there - delivered - to - the - Sheriff - or - his - officers - or - other - justices - of - our - Sovereign - Lord - the - King - and - of - his - peace: Take - away - the - prisoner! Gawd - save - the - King."

This sentence, which was delivered in one breath and with the rapidity of an expert, became towards its close a torrent of syllables ending up sharp upon the word "King" as upon a bell, and followed by a stinging silence.

"I demand," shouted George in an uncontrolled voice over his shoulder as they dragged him away.

"Put him in irons!" cried Captain Higgins as loudly as was consistent with order, discipline and self-control. "Put the——in irons!" And after this natural exhibition of feeling (which in his heart he regretted) the navigator returned to the bridge, relieved the second officer there present, and continued to take his ship down the fairway.

. . . . . .

In a little cubical space with iron sheeting above, below and all around, and a dirty porthole still streaked with the salt of the sea, the prospective Warden of the Court of Dowry sat upon the floor in a despondent mood.

There was already a slight swell upon the vessel his dungeon was far forward and he felt it to the full. They had brought him some detestable mess or other in a battered pannikin at noon. He had sent it away untasted. Whither they were taking him, what would be his fate, had formed for too many hours the subject of his speculations.

The movement of the ship was beginning to drive

even these gloomy considerations from his mind. He had already discovered two things: first that the term "irons" was a purely conventional one; and signified no more than that his harsh treatment might be made indefinitely severe. Secondly, that he was permitted to communicate with an extraordinarily lop-sided boy of some fifteen years who acted as general drudge in the ship and was deputed to bring him his food from the galley. He was about to discover a third feature in his new life.

A person evidently containing mixed the blood of the Caucasian and of the Negroid races approached him in his confinement and ordered him in broken English to follow up on deck.

The sea air revived him somewhat, but George was far from well when the half-breed, kicking towards him a lump of something which reminded poor Demaine of a diseased brick, a bucket of dirty water and a large and peculiarly evil mop, bade him scrub.

But George's first attempts at this new trade were such that his overseer, after looking at him first in astonishment and then in anger, assured him that any lack of good-will would necessarily be followed by some form of physical compulsion, the which, so far as his victim could gather from the torrent of broken English would probably consist in a larruping with the rope's end.

Doggedly and despairingly the poor fellow scrubbed away. He scrubbed perhaps too hard; at any rate he produced a patch of surpassing brilliance though of exiguous dimensions; and as the result of his efforts turned faint and ill with something worse than sea-sickness. He rose from his knees and tottered to his legs, and began aimlessly swabbing the odd patch of cleanliness with which he had diversified the beastly decks of the *Lily*.

But the friend and brother (if I may so term the Eurafrican) could bear no more, and seizing the unstable

landsman by the arm he thrust him, stumbling, down the stairway, and locked him again, into his cell.

The exhaustion of nature had caused the unfortunate politician to fall into a troubled doze, when he was aroused by a gentle kick, and saw before him the boy the battered pannikin, a piece of bread which had unfortunately dropped upon the deck aft of the funnel on its way, and, within the tin, a peculiarly loathsome liquid compound upon which, like the magic island of Delos, floated at large a considerable globe of fat.

"I don't want it," said George feebly, "take it away."

To his surprise—if surprise is not too strong a word for the faint emotions that still stirred him, the boy began, as the conventional term goes, to look ugly.

"Na yer dahn't!" he said, "yer dahn't gemme into trouble, yer brute! Yer gort them two Newcastle men inter trouble, and the myte seyes yer nearly got im. And yer gort Blacky inter trouble; yer dahn't ger *me*! Yer gottereatit!"

"I can't!" again said George feebly.

"Yer gottereatit!" repeated the boy, with that dogged assumption of authority which so ill fits the young. "By Gawd, if yer get cookie inter trouble I'll ave the next watch dahn an' they'll skin yer."

"Throw it away," said George, "there's a good boy. Throw it overboard. I'll make it all right in the long run," he added, nodding encouragingly.

The boy looked doubtful. "I dursent," he said sullenly. "Sides which, ow'll yer myke it all roight?"

"Never you mind," whispered George mysteriously. "You leave me the bread—I might try that . . . the clean part," he added after a sudden wave of nausea—"but chuck the rest, there's a good lad. I can't bear it." His whisper almost rose to a little scream. . . ." can't bear to look at it."

The boy still continued to eye him doubtfully and contemptuously.

"Yer cawn't myke it all roight!" he said, but he bethought him that if the wretched prisoner could not eat he should catch it from the cook just the same, and that his own interest lay in the disposal of the garbage. He drank a good swill of it himself—he was not over-fed on the *Lily*,—went up on deck for a moment,—and George could hear the splash as the horror went overboard.

In a moment the boy had returned.

"Yer ought ter be griteful," he said, "I've sived yer a lickin."

"Thank you," said George warmly, with his mouth full. He had found himself able to munch the bread, and it did him good.

The boy lingered; he took the same interest in the stowaway that he might have taken in an animal at the Zoological Gardens, and the episode broke the monotony of his fourth voyage.

"Yer'll ketch it at Parham!" he said in a cheery tone.

George did not understand. "Why Parham?" he asked weakly.

"Coz that's where they'll land yer. That's where they'll put yer shore. They'll ave the cops there roight on the quay wytin for yer, and they'll put yer ahverboard in the little dinghy, they wull: they wahn't thrah yer bundle arter ye, anforwhoy? acause yer arn't got none. But they'll send one of th' orficers and ee'll and yer ahver ter th' cops, and ee'll sye: 'ee's been very vilent'—that's what ee'll sye: that's what they said wiv the larst un: and they clapped th' darbies on *im* . . . saw em meself," continued the boy most untruthfully. Then not knowing his man and going a step too far, he continued: "Ee was ung, ee was: ung in Lewes Gaol," he ended, to give the story point and finish.

The poor pedantry of maps does not weigh upon the governing classes of this country, and Demaine might

have had some difficulty in answering in an examinatio exactly where Parham lay, but he knew that it was o the south coast, he knew one reached it easily in an hou or two from London, because he had gone to golf there He knew that there was a good motor track between th harbour and Highcliff, and altogether Parham sounde to him like an echo from now forgotten, dearer, an long dead days. He affected indifference.

"Well," he said, "it's all the same to me."

"Ah," said the boy, not ready to relinquish th delicious morsel, "sah yer sye! Ut wahn't be t syme tomorrermornin.'"

"Do you mean," said Gorge, with—what might see in such a man impossible—a touch of cunning lent hi by adversity, "Do you mean that this old tub can mak Parham in twenty-four hours?"

"I dunno bout arhs," said the boy surlily, "an' she norr a tub either" (for they have a curious loyalty t their temporary homes), "but it's a dy's run. An fool knahs that," he added courteously.

George dared not betray the hope that was rising i his heart. Luckily for him the boy volunteered h next information.

"We're orf Long Nahse now," he said, "but I dunn bout th' toide outsoide."

"No?" said George, merely desiring to prolon this all-important conversation.

"Nah: I dahn't, I tell yer!" said the boy defiantl "nor there's norr many does. I'll lye yer dahn't yerself

At this stage of the conversation and just as an awk ward pause interrupted it, a new terror struck the bo

"Oh chise me!" he said, "look at yer tin!"

"What's the matter?" asked George as he peer into the empty tin.

"It's gorn empty," whimpered the boy.

"Well," said George, his spirits already improved b the news of Parham, "what of it?"

"Whoy," said the unhappy scullion, "Whoy, yer cuddenever empty that tin—they'll foind me aht!" he said, and began to sniffle. "Wort are yer to empty it wiv, yer fool? Yer eyn't got a spoon!"

"Say I licked it," said George with attempted humour.

"They'd blieve ut of yer," said the boy viciously, "ye're nothin but a woilbeast! Gettin us all inter trouble!" He sniffled. 'Ye're a curse on th' ship, that's wort you are, an I blieve she'll founder. I blieve she'll stroike in th' noight and go to Ell. *You'll* be drahwnded, anyow!" he viciously added as he restrained his tears in prospect of the wrath to come.

But the thought of safety which the mention of Parham had brought revived George, and he bore no ill-will. 'Look here," he said, "I'll swab it out with my bread and they'll think I cleaned it up, but it's on condition that you chuck the bread overboard," he added.

The boy accepted the pact and was comforted. It was a cheap act of kindness, but he hoped it might stand him in good stead a few hours later.

The June night fell gradually upon the sea, the slight swell dropped to something almost imperceptible. Through his miserable porthole George could see great sheets of moonlight p'aying upon the easy surface, and there was no noise but the regular thud of the engine.

He fell into a profound sleep.

CHAPTER XI

AS George Mulross Demaine drifted down river in his cell that Tuesday afternoon the 2nd of June, Dolly sat blankly in Downing Street with the waters of despair at his lips.

Evil breeds evil.

As he considered the gloomy prospect, new aspects of it rose before him. Not only was he privately between these two fires, the sudden madness of the outgoing Warden, the disappearance of his successor, but the retirement of Charles Repton had been publicly announced and Dimmy's nomination had appeared alongside with it in the morning papers. The double news was all over England.

Yet another torturing thought suggested itself. How and when should he fill the vacancy? What was he to do?

Repton was impossible. His disaster was not in the papers, thank God, and could not be, under the decent rules which govern our press. But it was already the chief tittle-tattle of every house that counted in London. There could be no interregnum with Repton still nominally filling the place. He might wait as long as he dared, give it to a third man, and then have Demaine turn up smiling and hungry: and if that happened the Prime Minister would earn what he dreaded most on earth, the enmity of those who had been his friends; perhaps a breach with Mary Smith herself.

He was not fit to do more than survey the misfortune of the moment: he was still in his perplexity, when he

heard the bell ringing in the next room, and was told that he himself was personally and urgently wanted upon the telephone.

He put up his hand, but the secretary would take no denial: it was something absolutely personal. Who was it from? It was from Lady Repton.

If it can be said of any wealthy and powerful man that he ever betrays in his features or gait a purely mental anxiety, then that might be said in some degree of the unfortunate Prime Minister at that moment. He suffered so acutely that his left lung, the sense of which never wholly left him, seemed to oppress him with actual physical pain.

He took the telephone, dreading what he might hear. It was a trifle less of a blow than he had expected. All he heard was the agitated voice of Lady Repton assuring him that she had waited as long as possible before troubling him, but that she was now really anxious, because Charles had not come home. Had he gone in a taxi or a hansom, or how? It was more than half an hour since the Prime Minister had telephoned her, and Charles was always *so* regular.

It was perhaps weariness or perhaps a sense that he could do nothing which made the Prime Minister merely answer that he was sure to come in a moment.

"Repton has been very busy to-day," he said, "and has had a great deal on his mind. He has become a little unhinged: that is the whole truth, Lady Repton: nothing more. But I think he should be carefully nursed. Pray do not be anxious."

The words faltered a little, for he himself was more than anxious. Heaven only knew what Repton might not be capable of, until they had got him safe behind the four walls of his home. . . And after that the doctors.

He stopped the conversation a little rudely, by taking advantage of a long pause to ring off. While he was in the act of doing so a servant asked him in the most

natural manner in the world whether he would not see Sir Charles Repton who was waiting below.

I grieve to record that the young and popular Prime Minister gave vent to the exclamation "Good God!" For a moment he thought of refusing to see him; then he heard coming up through the distances of the official house a cheery voice saying:

"Yes, it's all very well for you, you're a butler with a regular place; when the Government goes out you don't. You're a sort of permanent official. But we . . . !"

"Show him up," said the Prime Minister in a qualm, "show him up at once. *At once!*" he repeated, losing all dignity in his haste, and tempted to push the solemn form of the domestic who stalked upon his mission of doom as majestically as though he were about to announce a foreign Ambassador, or to give notice.

In a moment Charles Repton had entered.

He had bought, during his brief odyssey, a gigantic Easter Lily in a Bond Street shop which sells such ornaments. This blossom flourished in the lapel of his coat and pervaded the whole room with its perfume.

"My dear fellow," he shouted, running up to the horrified Prime Minister and taking him by both hands, "My dear fellow! Come, no pride: you know as well as I do it's all bunkum. Why, I could buy and sell you any day of the week. It's true," he mused, "there's birth of course, but it's a fair bargain. Birth gives you your place and brains give me mine. Do you mind smoking?"

"Yes," said the Prime Minister, after which he said, "No—I don't know . . . I don't care. Why didn't you go home?"

"I didn't go home," said Sir Charles solemnly, and thinking what the reason was . . . "didn't . . . go . . . home, because— Oh, I know, because I wanted to talk to you about that peerage."

"For God's sake don't talk so loud," said Dolly with real venom in his voice.

"All right then I won't," shouted Sir Charles, "though I really don't see what there is to be ashamed of. You're going to give me a peerage and I'm going to take one. You know as well as I do that you didn't think I'd take one and I wasn't quite sure myself. Mind you, it's free," he added coarsely, "gratis, *and* for nothing."

"My dear fellow," said the unhappy Premier,—

"Oh yes, I know, that's the double-ruff dodge. You won't ask for anything, but old Pottle will. And then when I come to you and complain you will say you know nothing about it. Of course I shan't pay! It'll be no good asking me; but what I want is not to be *pestered*."

The Prime Ministe almost forced him down into the chair from which he had risen, and said again:

"Do talk lower, Repton. Do remember for a moment where you are. No, certainly you shan't be bothered."

"What else was there?" continued Sir Charles genially, interrogating the ceiling and twiddling his thumbs. "There was something, I know," he continued, looking sideways at the carpet.

He got up, walking slowly towards the door, and still murmuring: "There was something else, I know." He touched his forehead with his hand, stood still a moment as if attempting to remember, then shook his head and said: "No, it's no use. It was something to do with some concession or other, but I'm not fit for business to-day."

"Repton," said Dolly in a tone which he rarely used, and had never found ineffectual, "don't say anything as you go out, don't say anything to anybody. Do get into a cab and go straight home. You promised me you would."

"I'll keep my promise," said Sir Charles with fine candour, "I always do. See if I don't. Look here,

to please you I'll make him drive across the Parade here under your windows. There ! "

And he was true to his word. He did indeed dig the servant in the ribs as that functionary handed him his hat, his malacca cane and his gloves, he also wished to see if the butler could wrestle, and he winked a great wink at one of the footmen, but he said no word. He jumped into the cab that was waiting for him, and told the driver to go round by Delahaye Street on to the Parade.

The Prime Minister was cautiously watching from a window to make sure that the new incubus upon his life was on its way to incarceration, when he found himself only too effectually assured : for he saw, leaning out of a hansom which was going at a great pace towards the Mall, a distant figure waving its hat wildly and calling in tones that could be heard over the whole space of the Parade :

" I'm keeping my word, Dolly, I'm keeping my word ! "

So went Sir Charles Repton homeward, and a settled darkness gathered and fell upon the Premier's heart.

Sir Charles did keep his word.

He drove straight to his house, enlivening the way by occasional whoops and shouting bits of secret information very valuable to investors, to sundry acquaintances whom he recognised upon the way. At one point (it was during a block at the top of St. James's Street) he insisted on getting out for a moment, seizing by the hand the dignified Lord String who had advised the highest personages in matters of finance, and telling him with a comical grin that if he had bought Meccas that day on behalf of the Great he had been most imprudent, for there was an Arab rising and the big viaduct was cut —the first misfortune that hitherto prosperous line had suffered.

Near the Marble Arch a change came over him. He

felt a sudden and violent pain behind the ears, and clapped his hands to the place. He did more: when the spasm was over he put up the little door and told the cabby; he made him a confidant: he told him the pain had been very severe.

The driver, who was not sympathetic, replied in an unsuitable manner, and they were in the midst of a violent quarrel when two or three minutes later the cabman, who was handicapped by having to conduct his vehicle through heavy traffic, drove up to the house.

Lady Repton was waiting near the door; she sent out no servant, she came out to the cab herself, silenced the rising vocabulary of the driver with a most unexpected piece of gold, and tripped up again into the house.

Sir Charles was philosophising aloud upon the gold band round his umbrella, letting his domestics thoroughly understand the precise advantages and disadvantages of such an ornament, when she took him by the arm quite gently and began leading him upstairs.

. . . . . .

Meanwhile in Downing Street an indispensable secretary of the name of Edward was hearing what he had to do.

Edward had been at King's, for his father had sent him there. From the Treasury which he adorned he had been assumed by the Prime Minister, his father's chief college friend, and given the position of private secretary; admirably did he fill its functions.

He was a silent Welshman, descended from a short line of small squires, and he comprehended, in a manner not wholly natural to a man under thirty, the frailties of the human heart. The instructions he received from his chief, however, were of the simplest possible type, and called for the moment upon none of his exceptional powers.

There was to be no writing and no telephoning: he was to call upon Bowker, because Bowker had the largest specialist experience of nervous diseases in London, and therefore in the world.

He was to come as from the Reptons, and to give an appointment at Repton's house, telling the doctor that he should there find Sir Anthony Poole. He was to go at once to Sir Anthony Poole, whose general reputation stood higher than any other medical man's, to approach him as from the Reptons, to give him a similar appointment and to inform him that he would meet there Dr. Bowker. He was to tell them the whole sad truth, and beg for a certificate. The unfortunate gentleman could then be given the advantages of a complete rest cure.

He was next to go to Lady Repton's at once, and ask her leave to call upon Dr. Bowker and Sir Anthony Poole. She would give it: the Prime Minister had no doubt of that. He was to suggest to her the hour he had already named to those eminent men. That very evening Sir Charles would be certified a lunatic, and one load at least would be off the Premier's mind; and a load off his mind, remember, was a load off his lung, and consequently an extension of lease granted to a life invaluable to the State.

Within three-quarters of an hour Edward Evans had done all these things. He had even cut matters so fine that the physicians were to call at seven, and Lady Repton would telephone the result—she dared trust no other agency.

So far as a man in acute anxiety can be satisfied the young and popular Prime Minister was satisfied, but his left lung was at least one-half of his being as he went back again on his weary round to the House of Commons, and the other half of his being was fixed upon a contemplation of his fifty-fifth year.

. . . . . .

At the door of Sir Charles Repton's house was drawn up an exceedingly neat brougham, and Dr. Bowker had entered.

A few moments later there walked up to it the tall strong frame of a man a trifle over-dressed but redeeming such extravagances by a splendidly strong old face, and he was Sir Anthony Poole.

Two things dominated the conceptions of Sir Anthony: the first the antiquity of his family, which was considerable; the second a healthy contempt for the vagaries of the modern physical science.

He was himself as learned in his profession as any man would care to be, but his common sense, he flattered himself, was far superior to his learning—and he flattered himself with justice. He was a devout Christian of some Anglican persuasion; his family numbered thirteen sons and one daughter. His income was enormous. I should add that a knowledge of the world had taught him what real value lay behind men like Sir Charles Repton, who had stood the strain of public life and had found it possible to do such great service to their country.

The mind of Dr. Bowker was dominated also by two considerations: the first a permanent irritation against the survival of those social forms which permitted men an advantage purely hereditary; the second a conviction, or rather a certitude, drawn from clear thinking that organisation and method could deal with the cloudy blunders of mere general knowledge as a machine can deal with dead matter, or as an army can deal with civilians.

Dr. Bowker's birth was reputable and sound; his father had been a doctor before him in a country town, and an earnest preacher in the local chapel; his grandfather a sturdy miner, his great-grandfather a turnkey in Nottingham Gaol.

He was therefore of the middle rank of society; but after all, his social gospel such as it was weighed upon

him less than his scientific creed. He did not *think*: he *knew*. What he did not know he did not pretend to know. For the rest he was always a little nervous and awkward in society and preferred the communion of his books and an occasional spin upon a bicycle to the conversation of the rich.

I should add that he revered Sir Charles Repton not only as all men of the world must revere a great statesman who has found it possible for many years of the strain of public life to be of service to his country, but also as a man of inestimable value in proving that the solid Nonconformist stock could do in administration, when it chose to enter that sphere, what it had so triumphantly shown it could do in commerce.

The two men were shown into an enormous room on the ground floor where it was the custom of Sir Charles (in happier days!) to receive those whom he feared or would inveigle. Lady Repton at once join 1 them.

She was agitated; it was even distressing to watch her agitation. She described to them the violent pain which her husband had suffered twice, first the yesterday evening just before dinner, next at this moment on driving up to his house in a cab. She described as best she could the situation of these spasms of suffering, and she more than hinted that she connected with them a novel and very astonishing demeanour on her husband's part which (here she almost broke down) she hoped would justify them in ordering him if necessary with their *fullest* authority, to take a rest cure. She warned them that she had told him nothing; she had always heard it was wise in such cases. He thought they had come merely as advisers upon the pains he had felt behind the ear, but a few words of his conversation would be enough to convince them of that much graver matter.

She left them for a moment together, and went to prepare her husband. She was a woman of heroic endurance. Her father had been in his time a God-

fearing man, and had accumulated a small competence in the jute line.

Dr. Bowker, let it be remembered, was a specialist in nervous diseases. Sir Anthony Poole, let it also be remembered, was not, but he was something infinitely better in his own estimation: he was a man who had attended more distinguished people and with greater success than any other physician in London. Dr. Bowker's word as a specialist could not be doubted. Sir Anthony Poole had only to express an opinion upon a man's health in any particular and that opinion became positive gospel to all who heard it.

The medical judgment of no two men given concurrently could carry greater weight. By an accident not infrequent in all professions, these two great men, though their rivalry was not strictly in the same field, each undervalued the scientific aptitude of the other. Each would have gone to the stake for the corporate value of that small ring to which both belonged, but neither would admit the claim of the other to a special if undefined precedence.

On the rare occasions when they met, however, they observed all the courtesies of life, and on this occasion, in the large ground-floor room of Sir Charles Repton's house, they sat, when Lady Repton had gone out, exchanging platitudes of a very attenuated, refined sort in a tone worthy of their correct grooming and distinguished appearance. By a singular inadvertence they were summoned together.

"Sir Anthony," said Dr. Bowker, bowing, smiling and making a motion with his hand towards the door.

"Dr. Bowker," said Sir Anthony, copying the courteous inclination, and thus it was that Sir Anthony Poole had precedence, and first interrogated Sir Charles Repton alone.

The conversation was brief. When Sir Charles had

answered the first questions very simply, that he had two or three times in the last twenty-four hours felt shooting pains behind the ear, he began to speak in an animated way upon a number of things, and described a humorous incident he had recently witnessed in the Strand with a vigour highly suspicious to so experienced a physician as Sir Anthony Poole.

Sir Anthony asked him what he ate and drank, received very commonplace answers, and was twice assured by the Baronet whose wife had used that simple method to deceive him, that he had not for weeks felt any return of his old complaint, and that he only regretted that Lady Repton should have put Sir Anthony to the trouble of calling. He understood also that Dr. Bowker had been sent for.

"Yes," said Sir Anthony a little uneasily. "I really imagined that the matter would be rather worse than it seems to be. You know it is our custom sometimes to call in another . . ."

"Yes I know," said Repton, with a slight smile, "it's a pity you called in old Bowker. I know he's very good at nerves or aches or something, but he's such an intolerable old stick. The fact is, Sir Anthony," he said, fixing that eminent scientist with a keen look and slightly lowering his voice, "the fact is, Dr. Bowker *isn't quite a gentleman.*"

"You're a little severe," said Sir Anthony, smiling, "you're a little severe, Sir Charles!"

"Mind you," added Repton, "I don't say anything against him in his professional capacity."

"Certainly not," said Sir Anthony.

"But there are cases when a man's manners do make a difference,—especially in your profession."

Sir Anthony beamed. "Well, Sir Charles," he said, "I'm very glad to hear it's no worse,"—and as Sir Anthony went out he muttered to himself: "No more mad than I am; but he mustn't go talking like that about

other people." And the physician chuckled heartily.

Dr. Bowker's introduction to, and private stay with, the patient was briefer even than had been Sir Anthony's. He chose for his gambit the remark: "Sir Anthony Poole has just seen you I believe, Sir Charles?"

"Yes he has," answered Charles Repton in a pleasant and genial tone, "yes he has, Dr. Bowker, though why," he added, with a happy laugh, "I can't conceive. After all, if I wanted a doctor for any reason I should naturally send to a specialist."

When Sir Charles had answered the next few questions very simply, that he had two or three times in the last twenty-four hours felt shooting pains behind the ear, he then reverted to his praise of the specialist.

"If I had any nervous trouble, for instance, Dr. Bowker, I should send for you. If I had trouble with my tibia, I should send for Felton."

Dr. Bowker nodded the most vigorous approval. It was evident that Sir Charles Repton's considerable if superficial learning was standing him in good stead.

"If I had trouble with my aural ducts I should send for Durand, or," he continued, in the tone of one who continues to illustrate a little pompously, "if my greater lymphatics were giving me trouble, Pigge is the first name that would suggest itself."

Dr. Bowker's enthusiasm knew no bounds. "You are quite right, Sir Charles," he said, "you are quite right." He almost took the Baronet's hand in the warmth of his agreement. "If more men—I will not say of your distinction and position, but if more people —er—of what I may call the—er—directing brain of the nation, were of your opinion, it would be a good day for Medicine."

"Now a man like Poole," went on Charles Repton nonchalantly, "what does he know, what *can* he know, about any particular trouble? And mind you, an edu-

cated man always knows in more or less general terms what his particular trouble is. Why Poole—well . . ." Here Sir Charles ended with a pitying little smile.

"At any rate," said Dr. Bowker, bursting with assent, "I understand the old trouble has not returned. And if it had, as you very well said, it would be Felton's job rather than mine. Of course it has a nervous aspect; everything has, but every specialist has his own field."

And Dr. Bowker went out, communing with himself and deciding that the foolish anxiety of wives might be an excellent thing for the profession, but was hardly fair upon the purses of their husbands.

"Well, Sir Anthony?" said Dr. Bowker as he entered the ground-floor room.

"Well, Dr. Bowker?" said Sir Anthony with a responsive smile.

"I really don't see why they sent for us," said Dr. Bowker.

"I thoroughly agree," said Sir Anthony Poole.

"There's nothing more to be done, I think?" said Dr. Bowker.

"Nothing," said Sir Anthony Poole.

"Shall we speak to Lady Repton?" said Dr. Bowker.

"We'll write her," said Sir Anthony Poole.

They took leave of Lady Repton in a solemn and sympathetic manner, assuring her that it was better to give their impression in writing, and that she should receive it in the course of that evening. And having so fulfilled their mission, these two eminent men went off together with a better feeling between them than either would have thought possible an hour before.

"He is a singularly intelligent man," said Sir Anthony Poole as they parted at the door of Dr Bowker's Club, "a singularly intelligent man. Of course one would have expected it from his position, but I did not know until to-day how really remarkably intelligent and cultivated he was."

"I thoroughly agree with you," said Dr. Bowker, taking his leave, "he is what I call . . ." He sought a moment for a word . . . "He is what I call a really cultivated and intelligent man."

That evening Lady Repton received a short but perfectly clear opinion signed by both these first-class authorities, that her husband was in the full possession of his faculties, and that it would be the height of imprudence to set down any extravagance of temper or momentary zeal upon any particular question to mental derangement or to connect it with a slight accidental headache.

Lady Repton in her grievous anxiety (for at the very moment she read the message she heard Sir Charles talking to a policeman out of a window, and telling him that it was ridiculous to try and look dignified in such a uniform), Lady Repton I say, at her wits' end for advice, was bold enough to ring up the Prime Minister whom she hardly knew, and to tell him all: There was no chance of a certificate; what, oh what should she do?

The Prime Minister was not sympathetic. He did not desire further acquaintance with the lady.

The Premier's cup was full. His Warden of the Court of Dowry had resigned: the new Warden was appointed. The Warden who had resigned had gone mad; the Warden whom he had appointed had fled. At least—at least he might have been spared the madman! But no, he was not granted even this! the madman was still loose over London like a roaring lion, capable of doing infinite things within the next twenty-four hours. What was a peerage to a madman? What was a Wardenship of the Court of Dowry to a man who was not? The crumb of comfort that would have been afforded him by locking up the wretched lunatic who was the root of half his troubles was snatched from him.

It was enough to make a man cut his throat.

So ended that dreadful Tuesday in Downing Street,

and all night long between his fits of tortured and horror-stricken sleep wherein his left lung and his fifty-fifth year were the baleful demons of his dreams, the young and popular Prime Minister would wake in a cold sweat and imagine some new horror proceeding from Repton let loose.

The summer night is short. Wednesday most gloriously dawned, and after two hours of attempted slumber under the newly risen light, the Prime Minister arose, a haggard man.

The lines on either side of the young Prime Minister's mouth had grown heavier during the suffering of the night.

Had he been married and had his wife felt for him that affection which his character would surely have called forth she would have been anxious to observe the change. But such is the strain of political life and such the ambitions it arouses, that his suffering passed unnoticed with the majority, and with the rest was a subject for secret congratulation.

He was down very early. Before he had eaten he went rapidly and nervously into his secretary's room and said :

"Any news, Edward ?"

"Yes," said his secretary, looking if possible more nervous than his chief, "I'm sorry to say there is. The *Herald* is advertising an interview with Repton."

"The *Herald !*" said the Prime Minister between his set teeth.

"Yes, the *Herald*," answered the secretary, "it really doesn't much matter," he continued wearily (he had been up most of the night), "if it wasn't the *Herald* it would be somebody else."

"We must pot 'em as they come," answered the Premier grimly, "and the *Herald* won't publish that interview at any rate."

"Yes, let them publish it," said the secretary . . . . "I'll write it if you like."

"That's what I mean," said the Prime Minister. "I mean they won't publish what people think they will."

"No," said Evans, "they won't. . . . He's been shouting out of a window," the secretary went on by way of news.

The Prime Minister groaned.

"What has he been shouting?" he breathed hoarsely.

"Oh just insults, nothing important, but the police have complained. And late last night he pointed out Betswick, who was a little buffy, stumbling down the pavement—sitting down, some say—. He shouted from his window to a lot of people in the street that it was Betswick. And now Betswick is afraid of going to open the Nurses' Home this afternoon. . . . . It's a damned shame!" ended the secretary, exploding. "What the devil are you to do with a man . . . it's like—it's like—it's like an anarchist with little packets of dynamite."

"Have you looked at the papers yet, Edward?" asked the Prime Minister.

"Some of 'em," answered his secretary gloomily.

"Nothing in the *Times?*"

"Oh no," said Edward, "nothing in any of the eleven London papers on the official list."

"Do you think the others count?"

"Well," answered the secretary thoughtfully, "there are the two evening papers that have been making such a fuss about the Concessions in Burmah."

"Edward," said the Prime Minister, "it's a desperate remedy, but take the paper you have there, write out a note and get them to lunch. Not with me—with you. They'll come."

"Lunch is no good," said Edward.

"Why not?"

"Evening papers go to press in the morning."

"Do they indeed?" said the Prime Minister, with

the first lively glance he had delivered since the beginning of this terrible debacle. "That's really worth knowing! I never knew that." He gazed into space, then suddenly waking up he said: "Why then, Edward, there's no time to lose! Go and see them at once. Go and see them yourself, Edward."

"It isn't much good," said Edward. "I know one of them, and the other's dotty."

"Never mind," said the Prime Minister, "never mind. Do it somehow. Kill 'em if you must," he added jocosely, and his secretary went.

The Premier left his secretary's room and mournfully approached his breakfast.

Upon his table a time-honoured device constructed of brass and wood was designed to hold the newspaper while the tenant of that historic house might be at meals. Upon this was propped up, open at the leading page, a copy of the *Times*. The leaders were discreet. He found no word from beginning to end, save a little note in small type to the effect that Sir Charles Repton would be unable to speak at the great Wycliffite Congress, he was confined to the house with influenza; a similar note he was assured had appeared in all the eleven newspapers upon the official list, and through them would be distributed to the provincial press; the only thing left to the discretion of their editorial departments being the disease from which the distinguished patient might be suffering, which appeared in one as phlebitis, in another as tracheotomy, and in a third as a severe cold.

Of Demaine not a word.

Dolly thanked Heaven for the discipline which makes the Press of London the most powerful instrument of Government in the world.

His thanks were premature; and the gentle, somewhat mournful atheism which was his only creed received excellent support when he saw among certain items of news which were laid upon his table every morning, two

cuttings from foreign papers which told at great length and in the plainest details the whole story of the dreadful episode in the City, and connected it in so many words with the scandalous scene in the House of Commons. He could only comfort himself by reflecting that news which leaked out abroad was rarely if ever permitted to enter the Island He reflected that time is a remedy for all evils, and he made ready for the duties of the day.

Meanwhile his secretary, Edward,—to give him his full title, Teddy Evans—had come to the first of the two offices which it was his business to visit. It was not yet nine o'clock, and there was still time to cut on the machine.

At the Treasury Evans had written regularly for a large evening paper,—he knew his way about such an organism. He betrayed no undue haste, well knowing the subtle delight the menials would have before such a display of retarding his every effort, and when the fat man, Mr. Cerberus, who keeps the door of the *Capon* offices, had pushed to him a dirty scrap of paper on which he was to write his name and business, he quietly asked for an envelope as well. It was given him with some grumbling.

He wrote his message : " If you have begun machining, stop. I've been sent up here urgently.—E. E."

He closed it, gummed it down, and waited. He had not ten seconds to wait. A young man who looked and was underfed, a gaunt tall young man with hair as long and as dank as the waving weeds of the sea, received him with immense solemnity. It was not often that affairs of State came his way. One such had come earlier in that very year. It had been the occasion of his lunching with the exalted individual who now sat before him, and he had never forgotten it.

" Mr. Evans," he said rather pompously, lifting his left hand and fixing two large burning, feverish eyes upon

the secretary, " this place is the confessional. Anything you say shall be sacred . . . absolutely sacred ! "

But Evans was cheery enough.

" It's nothing of any importance," he said, " but well, I'm a great friend of the Reptons."

" I know," said the editor sympathetically, which was odd, for Evans only just knew the Reptons' address from having to write them letters, and the Reptons only just knew the look of Evans' face from having once had to ask him to a dinner of an official sort.

" Well," went on Evans unblushingly (how valuable are men of this kind !), " I am a great friend, especially of dear old Lady Repton—through my mother," he added in an explanatory tone, " but I won't go into that. The point is this : the whole family are really dreadfully concerned."

" I know, I know," said the editor of the *Capon*, still most sympathetic, and most grave.

" Well," said Evans with affected ill-ease, " the fact is we don't want anything said about it at all—nothing. That's the simplest way, after all. It's a great trouble. You really would do me a personal service, and they would be so grateful.

" By all means," said the editor of the *Capon*. He turned to a speaking-tube upon his right and was about to pull out the whistle, when a violent blast blew that instrument at the end of its chain into his face. The editor expressed disgust, and when this expression was over, asked for the statement. The statement was brought.

" They're waiting for the machine, sir."

The editor ran his blue pencil down the list, made a little X against one item, and said : " Bring me a proof of that, will you ? "

A slip of proof came up : it was to the effect that Sir Charles Repton was to speak at the Wycliffite Congress, and from his candid and vigorous action of the day before,

both in the House and outside it, it was hoped that his address would act as a clarion call in the present crisis of religion. ("And it would!" thought Edward, all goose-flesh at the thought).

"There's no harm in that," he said. Then with sudden thought: "What's the leader about?"

"The Concessions," said the editor of the *Capon*, smiling.

"Well," said Evans, "we don't agree about that, do we?" And he smiled back.

"Shall I leave general orders about Repton items during the day," said the editor.

"Why yes," said Evans, and then remembering his little subterfuge he added: "Don't print anything unless it's directly from the family. You understand me?"

"I understand," said the editor. "Riggles, the sub-editor, will be in charge after this. I'm going home."

He wrote in a large hand upon a large sheet of paper: "No Repton items, not even Press Agency, except from the house itself. F. D."—for his name was Francis Davis. "Take that to Mr. Riggles," he said to the devil, and the two men went out together.

Well knowing that Davis' house lay in the extreme of the suburbs, and that he himself was going into the heart of Fleet Street, Evans offered to give his companion a lift. To his disgust it was accepted, and he was constrained to drive the editor of the *Capon* to St. Paul's Station; it lost him ten minutes, and those ten minutes were nearly fatal. For when he had got back at full speed to the offices of the *Moon*, the paper had gone to press. The machines were shaking and thundering away in the basement, and mile after mile of diffused culture was pouring out in a cataract to feed the divine thirst for knowledge.

It seemed too late, but Evans went boldly through it all the same. The editor was gone, but to the sub-

editor he sent in his card and wrote upon it "From the Prime Minister." It was a time needing heroic measures.

He asked to see an advance copy. The leader was Repton—Repton—Repton, nothing but Repton. . . . Repton had given away the wickedness of modern finance; Repton for purposes of his own was prepared to expose the mockery of our politics; Repton would tell them the truth about the Concessions; they had a promise of an interview with Repton. What motives might have caused Repton to act as he had done they could not determine. It was sufficient for them that Repton, etc. . . .

The leader had a title, and the title of the leader was Repton. It had coined a new word: the word was "to Reptonise," upon the model of "to peptonise." The *Moon* threatened to reptonise the whole of our public life.

Evans spent about thirty seconds looking at the floor.

"Can they stop the machines, Mr. Price?" he asked, for Price was the sub-editor's name.

"Yes," said the sub-editor, "Why?"

Evans walked to the window and looked out into the City street and said without showing his face:

"Mr. Price, your proprietor is a very valued member of our party."

At the word "proprietor," Mr. Price changed colour. Yet Evans had not meant the proprietor of Mr. Price, he had merely meant the proprietor of the *Moon*.

"Mr. Price, I will tell you all" (and he told him more than all!). "Your proprietor left for Canada during the Easter Recess; he was taken ill in Montreal; he is on his way back, and he will be home next week."

Mr. Price nodded and at the same time inwardly admired the omniscence of the Government.

"Now Mr. Price," continued Edward, still gazing at the street opposite, "there is the promise of a peerage. These things are hardly ever mentioned, and I tell

it to you quite frankly. If that leader appears,"—turning round sharply—"the peerage will not be conferred, and your proprietor shall be told that that leader was the cause of it."

"But, Mr. Evans," began the sub-editor blankly.

Evans was suddenly determined. It was astonishing to see the change in the man. His conduct and attitude would have seemed remarkable to the most indifferent observer: to one who knew that the proprietor of the *Moon* had never been, until that moment, within five hundred miles of a peerage, it would have seemed amazing.

"Mr. Price," said Evans rapidly and very clearly, "you are in a cleft stick. If you don't print your present issue, if you must delay it, it will cost your proprietor a heavy sum directly and indirectly. I know that. But if you *do* print it will cost him no money, but . . ."

Mr. Price thought of the little home at Peckham; of the three young Prices, of Mrs. Price and of sundry affections that grow up in the most arid and most unexpected soils: he was in an agony as to which course would least destroy him: he made one last appeal:

"May I have it in writing?"

"Certainly not!" said Evans.

"Very well, Mr. Evans," said the sub-editor humbly, "I'll stop the machines," and with a heavy heart he rang the bell.

Thus it was that the *Moon* came out an hour later than usual, and that the leader dealt at so singular a moment with the pestilent vices of the King of Bohemia, and with his gross maladministration of Spitzbergen which it summoned to the bar of European opinion.

Those who have wondered why Edward, without previous training, so soon after this incident was made a partner of the great bank he now adorns, would wonder less if they had been present at that interview.

The press was safe.

That the agencies were safe went of course without saying. Block A (as a group of eight papers owned by one man is familiarly called by permanent officials) had been squared, the day before. Block B, another group of six owned by a friend of his, was for private reasons unable to publish news of this kind. The *Evening German* wouldn't dare, and the *Bird of Freedom* wouldn't know. *The Press* was safe so far as Repton was concerned.

But what about Demaine?

The *Herald* had been informed pretty sharply that it was compelled for unavoidable reasons to postpone its interview with Sir Charles Repton. The very paragraph had been written out by Edward, and the *Herald* had swallowed the pill.

But what about Demaine?

That had got ahead of them, and there was nothing to do but to wait until Demaine should be found. The very moment that he was found they could act and an explanation should be given that would soon cause the mystery to be forgotten. But a silence still surrounded that unlucky name.

Nothing had been heard in the Lobbies, nothing from Scotland Yard. Finally, and more important, Mary Smith herself could tell Dolly nothing, and if *she* could not, certainly no one else in London could.

She was really fond of her cousin, and for his sake she comforted, and, what was more important, restrained the imprudent Sudie.

As for Ole Man Benson, beyond a natural regret that such an asset as a son-in-law in the Cabinet was still held over as a contingent and that he could not for the moment close upon the option, he took the matter in a calm and philosophical spirit.

CHAPTER XII

"OH Liberty!" says the Bulgarian poet Machinchose in a fine apostrophe, too little known in this country. "Oh Liberty," etc.

Never had George Mulross Demaine known the sweets of that word in the days when he enjoyed its privilege to the full. Now, as the brilliant dawn of that Wednesday awakened him upon the deep he learned the beauty of Freedom.

Its meaning saturated his very being as he woke in his miserable cell, refreshed but very weak, and saw shafts of the happy morning sun coming level with the dancing of the sea, and making a rhythmic change of unreal network in the oval patch of light that was cast by the porthole against the filthy rust of the walls.

He felt mechanically for his watch and found nothing but bare skin; then (such a teacher is adversity!) he to whom induction was grossly unfamiliar, began to induce away like any child of Nature.

The sunlight was level, for the image of the porthole upon the wall was but little lower than the porthole itself:—therefore the sun had but just risen.

It was June, therefore if the sun had but just risen the hour was very early: how early he certainly could not have answered if you had asked him a week ago, but adversity, that admirable schoolmistress, was developing the mind of George Mulross as the blossom of a narcissus develops under the first airs of Spring, and he was capable of remembering a sunrise after the ball at the Buteleys',

and another after a big supper at Granges'. He was in bed before half-past five on each occasion. It must therefore be between four and five o'clock.

The term "solstice" was unfamiliar to this expectant member of the British Executive, but he seemed to remember that somewhere about this time of year the nights were at their shortest.

He was full of a new pride as he made these discoveries. Then two things struck him at once: the first that he was ravenously hungry, the second that all motion of the ship had ceased. He heard no sound of any kind except the gentle lapping of the tiny waves alongside, for it was calm except for the little breeze of morning.

He attempted with his new-found powers to pass the time in further induction, to guess by the position of the light how the ship lay, but as he had forgotten at which end of a ship the anchor is let go, and as he had no notion of the tide in the English Channel, nor even whether tides ran for six hours or twelve (he was sure it was one of the two), and as, in general, he was grossly ignorant of the data upon which such an induction should proceed, the effort soon fatigued him. He was content to prop himself up against the wall and crave for food.

He heard a step outside, he struck the door with his fist. To his delight a key turned in it, and the doubtful visage of the boy once more appeared. Early as was the hour, and divine the weather, the boy was still gloomy.

"Gettin' us inter more trouble, orl on us, yer dirty skunk!" was his greeting.

"I'm sure I'm very sorry," said George. "I only knocked because I'm so terrible hungry. Can't you get me something to eat?"

"Yus," said the boy thoughtfully, "I dahn't think! Yer'd myke me chuck it. Yer's particler as a orspital nuss," he added, with a recollection of a brazen woman in gaudy uniform whom a kind lady had thrust upon

his mother's humble home just before he had gone aboard.

Demaine was in acute necessity. "Look here," he said, "get me some bread."

"Whaffor?" asked the boy.

Demaine nodded mysteriously, and once again was his gaoler torn between a desire for some ultimate gain and the certitude that no present gain was obtainable.

He was a London lad, with all the advantages that London birth implies, and it had already occurred to him that Demaine's accent, manner and cuticle differed in a strange way from those of your stock stowaway. He had been impressed in the matter of the food; he was more impressed by certain little turns of language which he associated with those hateful, but, as he had been told, wealthy people, who came down and did good amid his mother's neighbours in the East End; and when he had thought it well over and tamed his prisoner further by one more well-chosen epithet, he went off and came back with a hunk of bread.

"Yer lucky," he said as he returned, "thet yer on a short trip. Otherwyes t'd uv been biscuit. . . ." Then he added, "and gryte wurms in ut!"

George did not reply. He bit into the bread in ecstasy, and his eyes, which his acquaintances in London commonly discovered to be lifeless, positively gleamed upon this summer morning.

"They gotter communicyte wiv the orfferities fust," said the boy pompously.

"Yes?" said George with his mouth full.

"Ho! yus, it is!" sneered the boy, who thought there was something of the toff in this use of the simply affirmative. "An' after that they'll land yer, and yer'll ave the darbies on afore breakfast-toime." He added nothing this time about hanging. The details of the moment were too absorbing.

"How do you mean 'communicate'?" asked George carelessly and all ears.

"Woy, wiv a flag, that's ow," said the boy.

Demaine had often been told of the long and complicated messages which the little pieces of bunting could convey, and he had himself presented to a country school a whole series of flags which, in a certain order, signified that England expected every man to do his duty. But he could not conceive how so complete a message as the presence and desired arrest of an unfortunate stowaway could be conveyed to the authorities ashore by any such simple means, unless indeed the presence of stowaways was so common an occurrence that a code signal was used for the purpose of disembarking that cargo.

The boy illumined him.

"They got th' flag up," he said, "syin' 'Send a baht,' and when they sees it they'll run up one theirselves—then's yer toime."

But the boy's information, as is common with the official statements of inferiors, was grossly erroneous.

A voice came bawling down from above, ordering him to tumble up with the prisoner.

Tumble up George did; that is, he crawled up the steep and noisome ladder, and as he put his head out into the glorious air, thought that never was such contrast between heaven and hell. He drank the air and put his shoulders back to it, to the risk of the green-black coat.

George Mulross was one of those few men who have never written verse, but he was capable that moment if not of the execution at least of the sentiment which the more classical of my readers are weary of in Prom. Vinc. Chor. A. 1-19, Oh the god-like air! The depth and the expanse of sky!

The fatherly sky was all light, the sun was climbing, and a vivid belt of England lay, still asleep, green and in repose under that beneficence; and in the midst of it, set all round with fields, lay a lovely little town. It was Parham.

Demaine had once or twice noted how strangely glad the houses of men seem from off the sea, but as he was familiar rather with Calais and Dover, with Ostend, Folkestone and Boulogne, than with other ports, and as he had more often approached them in winter weather than in the London season, there was something miraculously new to him in this vision which had been the delight of his forefathers: England from the summer sea.

The clear spirit bubbling within him encountered another muddier but forceful current as his eyes fell upon the first officer.

That individual surveyed him with hatred but did not deign to throw him a word. He bade the lad stand by George in a particular place upon the deck till he should be sent for; he next threatened several of the boy's vital organs if his prisoner were not properly kept in view, and having pronounced these threats, lurched away.

"Th' old man'll want yer soon, ter fill in is sheet," said the lad by way of making conversation. "Myebe ee'll ave ye larrupped, myebe ee wahn't. Ee didn't the larst un," he put in as an afterthought, as though it were the custom to larrup some seven stowaways out of eight by way of parting, and to make capricious exception of certain favourites.

"Yer'll ave to tyke thut sheet wiv yer; leastwyes whoever's in charge of the baht'll ave ter, an thye gives ut to th' cops, and th' cops shahs ut to the beak. As to do ut, to ave everyin roight and reglar. Otherwyes they cudden put yer awye—and they're bahnd ter do that: not arf!"

But Demaine was not heeding the discomforting comment of his warder. He was balancing in his mind the poor chances of the morning, and as he balanced them they seemed blacker with every moment.

The shore was perhaps half a mile away: the hour say five, perhaps half-past. By six, or half-past six

at the latest, the earliest people in Parham would be astir.

The fixed inveterate hope of the governing class that a gentleman can always get out of a hole, had dwindled within him to that dying spark to which it dwindles during invasions and at the hour of death.

He did not trust his accent, he did not trust his skin, he did not trust his parentage, he did not trust his wealth —alas, his former wealth!—to speak more accurately, his wife's former wealth,—to speak still more accurately, the former wealth of his wife's father.

He trusted nothing but blind chance, his muscles and flight.

He hated the vision which was in immediate prospect of the little weasel-faced captain with his pointed red beard, reciting by rote yet another string of idiotic sentences from a manual; he hated the vision of the next step, the men in blue, with their violence and their closing of his mouth by brutal means. Whether he could convince a magistrate he did not pause to inquire. The way was too long—it was a dark corridor leading to Doom.

He heard a second voice calling the boy to the accompaniment of oaths quite novel and individual and in a high voice that he had not yet heard, and he thought that his hour had come.

But the boy's reply undeceived him.

"Oi dursn't!!" he yelled down the decks, "Oi gotter look arter th' Skunk."

Apparently, thought George bitterly, he already had a fixed traditional name aboard the *Lily*, like Blacky and the Old Man

The cook, for it was he, emerged from the galley aft, stood in the brilliant sunlight and delivered rapid blasphemy with tremendous velocity and unerring aim.

The boy whimpered and was irresolute.

If the threats of the mate had been less practical

those of the cook might have had less effect, but between the prospect of the excision of his liver and of a series of hearty buffets and mighty kicks endways, what reasonable youth would hesitate in a civilisation such as ours?

The boy faltered visibly, and turning upon the Skunk informed him once again that he was always gettin' people inter trouble. Nay, more, he threatened to pay out the innocent cause of his despair for the divided duty in which he found himself.

The cook re-emerged; he had fixed on a new belt of ammunition and began firing in a manner if possible more direct and devastating and quite as rapid, as that which had distinguished the first volley. And the boy, who was, after all, more directly the servant of the cook than of any one else on board, wavered and broke. With a clear statement of the consequences should Demaine move an inch from the spot, and a promise to return before a man could spit to leeward, the boy dashed off to the galley, and for perhaps five seconds, perhaps ten, the prospective Warden of the Court of Dowry was free.

The movement of the human mind, says Marcus Aurelius (imitative in this sentence, as in most of his egregious writings), resembles that of a serpent.

There are serpents and serpents. Minds of Demaine's type move commonly with the motion of a gorged python but just roused from sleep; but even the python will, under compulsion, dart,—and, in those five seconds, not reason but an animal instinct drove the politician's soul.

He was up, on to the bale, over the bulwark and down ten feet into the sea, before he had even had time to formulate a plan. He could swim, and that was enough for him.

The splash made by Demaine's considerable form as it displaced in an amount equal to his weight the waters of the English Channel, came to the ears of the Watch, who was leaning comfortably over the further railing

at the other end of the vessel, looking out to seaward and ruminating upon a small debt which he had left behind him in the parish of Wapping. With no loss of dignity the Watch shuffled forward to see whether aught was displaced. The splash had been a loud one, but it might have been something thrown from the galley.

He first of all looked carefully over the starboard bow to seaward. There was no foam upon the water: everything was still. It occurred to him to cross the deck; he did so in a leisurely manner and thought he noted far down the side, and already drifting astern with the tide, a rapidly disappearing ring of foam. He was a stupid man (though I say it that shouldn't, for he came from Bosham, noble and fateful Mistress of the Sea), and he looked at the ring of foam in a fascinated manner, considering what could have caused it, until he was roused to life and to his duties by the thunder of the first officer who from the bridge demanded of him in perfectly unmistakable language what he had done to the Skunk.

The sense of innocence was so strong in the honest seafaring soul that he replied by a simple stare which almost gave the first officer a fit, and in the midst of the language that followed, the boy, positively pale with fear, came tearing from the galley and found, not his charge, but the Bosham man gazing like a stuck pig at his superior above, and at the world in general.

The reappearance of the boy was a welcome relief to the chief officer's lungs and intelligence; it added fuel to his flame. He very nearly leapt down from the bridge in his paroxysms of wrath, and heaven only knows what he would have done to the wretched lad whom he would render responsible for the misadventure had he not at that moment caught sight of a little speck upon the sunlit water far astern: it was the head of George Mulross Demaine, battling with fate.

The prospective Warden of the Court of Dowry could

swim fairly well. It had been his practice to swim in a tank. He had swum now and then near shore, but he had no conception of the amount of salt water that can get into a man's mouth in a really long push over a sea however slightly broken, especially if one enters that sea in a sort of bundle, without taking a proper header. Moreover, the phenomenon of the tide astonished him; he had imagined in his innocence that the sea also was a kind of tank and that he had a dead course of it for the shore, the nearest point of which lay just eastward of the harbour mouth.

As it was, England seemed to be flitting by at a terrible rate, and the *Lily*, when he turned upon his back and floated for a moment to observe her, had all the appearance of a ship proceeding at full speed up Channel, so rapidly did he drift away.

He swam too hurriedly and he exhausted himself, for his mind was full of terrors: they might fire upon him—he did not know what dreadful arsenal the *Lily* might not contain!

He remembered having noticed upon the cross-Channel steamers exceedingly bright little brass guns the purpose and use of which had often troubled him. Now he knew!—and he hoped against hope that no such instrument of death swivelled upon the poop of the *Lily*.

He dreaded every moment to catch the sharp spit of flame against the sunlight, a curl of smoke, the scream of the light shell, the ricochet, the boom that would come later sullenly upon the air, and all the rest that he had read of:—the first shot to find the range: the dreadful second that would sink him.

He was relieved, as minute after minute passed, and no such experiment in marine ballistics was tried. There was faintly borne to his ears as he was swept down the ceaseless stream of Ocean, a little clamour which, on the spot itself, was a roaring babel; he saw a group of men wrestling with the davits, but the davits were stiff, and

boat-drill was not in the programme of the *Lily*. Indeed of all the crew but two had ever handled such a contrivance as a davit before, and of these one was an Italian.

Another man than Captain Higgins would have been profoundly grateful to see the stowaway drown; not so that conscientious servant of the Firm. The stowaway received such food and lodging as had kept him living until such time he could be handed over to the Sheriff or his officers or any other servants or justices of our lord the King, who were competent to deal with breach of contract, tort, replevin and demurrer. The stowaway was responsible to the Law, and Captain Higgins was responsible for the stowaway; therefore must a boat be lowered. And because there was something grander in swinging out the davits in full view of a British town and harbour than in chucking the dinghy into the water, swing out the davits he would,—and he lost ten minutes over it—ten precious minutes during which the tide had carried the little speck that was the head of George Mulross Demaine almost beyond the power of his spy-glass.

Captain Higgins capitulated; he left the davits as they were—one stuck fast, the other painfully screwed half round, a deplorable spectacle for the town of Parham, and one shameful to the reputation of the sailor-men aboard the *Lily*, and he ordered the little dinghy out over the side.

They unlashed her and let her down. Two men tumbled into her, the second officer took command, and they rowed away down tide with all the vigour that Captain Higgins' awful discipline could inspire, directed in their course by his repeated injunctions and proceeding at a pace that must surely at last overhaul the fugitive.

When Demaine heard the beat of the oars and again floated to look backwards, he estimated the distance between himself and the shore and gave himself up for

lost. Now indeed there could be no doubt of the rope's end! He could not disappear like a whale for any appreciable time beneath the surface; the tales he had read (and believed) of heroes in the Napoleonic and other wars, who themselves, single-handed and in the water, had fought a whole ship's crew with success, he now dismissed as idle fables. There was nothing left for him but, somewhat doggedly, to continue the overhand stroke, for now that he was discovered there was no point in the slower breast stroke that had helped to conceal him. They were making (as they said in the days of the Clippers) perhaps three feet to his one, but freedom is dear to the human heart, and he pegged away.

The Shining Goddesses of the Sea loved him more than they loved the odious denizens of the *Lily;* they set the tide in shore, and the Sea Lady, the Silver-Footed One, led the little waves along in his favour.

He had come to a belt of water where the tide set inward very rapidly, along a gulley or deep of the shore water. It was a godsend to him, for his pursuers were still in the outer tide. He was now not a quarter of a mile from the water-mark, and still going strong, with perhaps two hundred yards between the boat and him; he could not feel their hot breath upon his neck, but he could hear the ryhthmic yell of the officer astern, criticising the moral characters of his crew with a regular emphatic cadence that followed the stroke of the oars . . . when his cold, numbed right foot struck something; then his left struck sand : . . . It was England! And the English statesman, like Antæus, was glad and was refreshed.

He stumbled along out of it—the water on the shelving sand was here not three feet deep. He stumbled and raced along through the splashing water. It fell to his knees, to his shins, to his ankles, and he was on dry land!

A very pretty problem for the amateur tactician learned in the matter of landing-parties, was here pre-

sented. The dinghy must ground far out: she could not be abandoned; it was an even race, and his pursuers would be one man short from the necessity of leaving some one in a boat which had grounded too far out for beaching.

Some such combination occurred in a confused way to Demaine, but he had no time for following it up. He did what he had done more than once in the last unhappy days—he ran. His numbed feet suffered agonies upon the shingle above the sand, but he ran straight inland, he crossed a rough road, went stumbling over a salted field, and made for a wind-driven and scraggy spinney that lay some half a mile inland, defying the sea winds. As he approached that spinney he saw two men from the boat just coming full tilt over the ridge of the sea road; as he plunged into it they were in the midst of the field beyond.

The undergrowth in the spinney was thick, but Demaine had the sense to double, and he crept cautiously but rapidly along, separating the thick branches as noiselessly as he could, and bearing heroically with the innumerable brambles that tore his flesh. He halted a moment to look through a somewhat thinner place towards the field, and there, to his considerable astonishment, he perceived the two sailor-men dawdling along in amicable converse and apparently taking their time, as though they were out upon a holiday rather than in the pursuit of a criminal.

It dawned upon George that there was a reason for this: the second officer could not leave the boat. The boat and the sea were hidden by the ridge of the sea road, and the longer the time the hearty fellows could spend ashore, the greater their relief from labour and their enjoyment of a pleasant day. He saw them sauntering towards the spinney; they took sticks and beat it in a sort of aimless, perfunctory manner, poking into the brushwood half-heartedly here and there, as though

Demaine had been a hare whom they desired to start from its form. They wandered off along the edge of the wood in a direction opposite to his own, and paused a moment to light their pipes upon their way.

It was a peaceful scene: but a moment would come when that scene could not be prolonged, and when their activity must be renewed. Demaine, therefore, pushed through the brushwood, still going as noiselessly as he could, and came out to the landward side of it upon a disused lawn.

The grass was brown and rank and trampled. It had not been mown that season. An old sun-dial stood in the midst of it; a wall bounded it upon two sides, and there was the beginning of a gravel path. He followed that path between two rows of rusty laurels, and round a sharp turn came upon the house to which this derelict domain belonged. He came upon it suddenly.

It stood low and had been masked from him by a belt of trees. He saw a little back door, and,—fatal as had such reasoning been in his immediate past,—he reasoned once more: that where there was a house with servant's offices, there would be a difference of social rank, there would be education, there would be understanding, and he must certainly come into his own.

His bleeding feet, the soaked rags that clung upon him, his hair hanging in absurd straight lines clogged with salt, would, could he have seen them in a looking-glass, have given him pause. But the exhaustion of these terrible hours was now upon him; the heat of the sun was increasing,—he was under an absolute necessity for food and repose.

He boldly opened the door and went in.

He found himself in a little room of which this door was evidently the private communication with the garden; it was a room that lifted his heart.

To begin with, it was lined everywhere with books, and though he himself had read perhaps but eighteen

volumes in the whole course of his early manhood, yet a room lined with books justly suggested to him cultivation, leisure, and a certain amount of wealth. A volume was lying with its flyleaf open upon the table. He saw pasted in it a book-plate in the modern style, made out in the name of Carolus Merry Armiger. Mr. Armiger, it seemed, was his unsuspecting host. Mr. Armiger' literary occupations did not interest George Mulross; such as they were he gathered them to have some connection with the Ten Lost Tribes.

Manuscripts were lying upon the table, manuscripts consisting of long double lists of names with a date between them. The Jewish Encyclopedia was ranged in awful solemnity before these manuscripts; the Court Guides, reference books and almanacs of London, Berlin, New York, Frankfort, Paris, Rome and Vienna, were laid ready to hand, and sundry slips detailing the family origins and marital connections of most European statesmen, including of course our own, completed the work upon which the chief resident of the house appeared to be engaged.

Forgetting the deplorable condition in which he was, a big scarecrow reeking and dripping salt water from sodden black rags that clung to his nakedness, George Mulross sank into a large easy-chair and breathed a sigh of profound content.

They might look as long as they chose, he thought they would look for him in vain! His pursuers did not know who he was nor that he had come back into his own rank of life again and had certainly found, though they were there as yet unknown to him, equals who would as certainly befriend and protect him.

He pictured the scene to himself:—the owner of the house enters—he is wearing spectacles, he is a busy literary man, a professor perhaps—who could tell?—a learned Rabbi! The papers and the books upon the table seemed to concern the Hebrew race. At any rate

a literary man—a solid literary man, He would come in, preoccupied, as is the manner of his tribe, he would look fussily for something that he had mislaid upon the table, his eyes would light upon the form of George Mulross Demaine. At first sight he would be surprised. A man partially naked, glistening in the salt of the sea, his hair falling in absurd straight wisps clotted with damp, his ace a mixture of grime and white patches where the water had washed it, his nails a dense black, his bare feet bleeding, would stand before him. But this strange figure would speak a word, and all would be well. He would say :

" Sir, my name is Demaine. You are perhaps acquainted with that name. I beg you to listen to me and I will briefly tell you," etc. etc.

The literary man would be profoundly and increasingly interested as the narrative proceeded, and at its close a warm bath and refreshment of the best would be provided, a certain deference even would appear in his host's manner when he had fully gathered that he was speaking to a Cabinet Minister, and from that moment the unhappy business would be no more than an exciting memory.

As George Mulross so mused he rose from his chair and was horrified to note that there stood in the hollow of it little pools of salt water, that the back was dripping wet, and that where his feet had reposed upon the Axminster carpet damp patches recalling the discovery of the Man Friday, the marks of human feet, were clearly apparent.

Even as he noted these things and appreciated that they would constitute some handicap to his explanation, he heard voices outside the door.

Alas, they were not the voices of the governing classes, they were not the voices of refinement and leisured ease. Oh ! no. They were the voices of two domestics engaged in altercation, the one male, the other female ; and the

latter, after affirming that it was none of her partner's business, evidently approached the door of the room in which he was.

For a moment his heart stopped beating. He heard her hand upon the outer handle of the door; by what form of address could he melt that uncultivated heart? Those bitter hours of his just passed had filled him with a mixture of terror and hatred for such English men and women as work for their living. He had always regarded them as of another species: he beheld them now in the aspect of unreasoning wolves.

By the grace of heaven the door was locked. He heard a female expletive, extreme in tone though mild in phrase, directed towards the domestic habits of her master, especially with regard to the privacy of his study, and he next heard her steps moving away. She was coming round by the garden; there was not a moment to lose . . . and there was not a cranny in which to hide.

I have expatiated on the effect of misery and of terror upon George's brain: I have but here to add that for two seconds he was a veritable Napoleon in his survey of terrain. He grasped in a flash that if he retreated by the garden door he was full in the line of the enemy's advance without an alternative route towards any base; and with such an inspiration as decided Jena, he made for the chimney.

The eccentricities of the master of the house (for he was obviously eccentric) appeared to include a passion for old-fashioned fireplaces; at any rate there was no register nor any other devilish device for impeding the progress of the human form, and George, with a dexterity remarkable in one of his bulk, hoisted himself into the space immediately above the grate. There the chimney narrowed rapidly to a small flue, and he must perforce support himself by the really painful method of pressing with his feet against the one wall, and with his cramped

shoulders against the other, lying in the atti ude of a man curled up in bed upon his right side,—but in no such comfort, for where the bed should be was air

He had not gained his lair a moment too soon. He could discover from it the hearth-rug, a small strip of the carpet, and the legs of sundry tables and chairs, when he heard the garden door open, and other legs,—human legs—natty, and their extremities alone visible, passed among the legs of the inanimate things. The head which owned them far above continued as the legs and feet bore it round the room, to criticise the habits of its master. It dusted, it went to the farther side of the apartment, the feet disappeared. They reappeared suddenly within his line of vision and stopped dead, while the invisible head remarked in a tone of curiosity :

" Whatever's that ! "

She was looking at the imprint of the feet. Next he heard her patting the damp arm-chair, and exclaiming that she never !

The strain upon George Mulross Demaine was increasing, but had it been tenfold as severe he dared not descend. A slight involuntary movement due to an effort to ease his shoulder off a point of brick produced a fall of soot which most unpleasantly covered his face.

He could hear a startled exclamation from the wench, her decision that she didn't understand the house at all, and her sudden exit.

Hardly had she shut the garden door behind her when a key was heard turning in the lock in the other door opening into the house, and the Expected Stranger, the Unknown Host, entered. The moment of George's salvation was at hand.

Two very large flat boots slowly tramped into the narrow region he could survey : above each nine inches of creased grey trouser leg could be seen : the boots, the trouser legs, did not approach the armchair ; they took little notice apparently of things about them. Their owner

grunted his satisfaction that none of his papers had been removed by the maid to whom he applied a most indiscreet epithet; he grunted further satisfaction that she had laid his fire and not lit it. Apparently it was among his other eccentricities to have a fire upon a June morning simply because the room was cold, and to let it die down before noon.

The Unknown came close to the grate. George heard large hands fumbling upon the mantelpiece, the unmistakable rattle of a match-box; next an arm midway to the shoulder, and at its extremity a hand bearing a lighted match appeared, and the Stranger Host thoughtfully lit the Newspaper upon which the fire was laid.

The dense and acrid smoke produced by our Great Organs of Opinion when they are put to this domestic purpose rose up and enveloped the unhappy George. It was the limit! And with one cry and with one roar, as Macaulay finely says of another crisis, the prospective Warden of the Court of Dowry slid down into the grate, ruining the careful structure of coal and wood, and stood in the presence of—he could scarcely believe his eyes—William Bailey

That tall, bewhiskered, genial oligarch expressed no marked astonishment. It is, alas! a characteristic of the eccentric that, just as he sees the world all wrong where it is normal, so, before the abnormal he is incapable of expressing reasonable emotion. All he said was, in a mild tone of voice.

"Well! well! well!"

To which Demaine answered, with the solemnity the occasion demanded:

"William, don't you know me?"

"Yes, I know you," said William Bailey thoughtfully, "Dimmy, by God! . . . Dimmy, d'you know that you present a most extraordinary spectacle?"

"You needn't tell me that," said Dimmy bitterly drawing his hand across his mouth and displaying two

red lips which appeared in the midst of his features like those of a comedy negro. "The point is what can you do for me?"

"My dear Dimmy," said William Bailey, his interest increasing as the situation grew upon him, "I am delighted to hear that phrase! I haven't heard it since I gave up politics! I haven't heard it since they tried to make me an Under Secretary,—only it used to be worded a little differently. Old schoolfellows of mine whom I had thrashed with a cricket stump in years gone by used to come up washing their hands and saying, 'What can I do for you?' Now for once in my life some one has asked me what *I* can do for *him*. Sweet Dimmy, all I have is at your disposal. Would you like to borrow some money, or would you prefer to wash?"

"I wish you'd chuck that sort of thing," said Demaine, angrily and with insufficient respect for a senior. "It isn't London and I'm not out for jokes. I'm in trouble."

"In trouble?" said William Bailey, asking the question sympathetically. "Oh don't say that? Dirty, maybe, and very funnily dressed, but not, I hope, in trouble?"

"Damn it!" said the other, "what are you in this house?"

"What I am out of it," said William Bailey cheerfully, "a harmless eccentric with a small property, several bees in my bonnet (the present one an anti-Semitic bee), and a great lover of my friends, Dimmy, especially men of my own blood. Now then, what do you want?"

"Do you own this house, or do you not?" demanded Dimmy.

"Why," said William Bailey, "it is very good of you to ask. I am what the law calls a lessor or lessee, or perhaps I am a bailee of the house. The house itself belongs to Merry. You know Merry, the architect who builds his father's houses?"

"The books have got 'Armiger' in them," said Dimmy suspiciously.

"That's a title," replied William Bailey, "not an English title," he continued hurriedly, "it was given him by the Pope."

"Anyhow, you're master here?" said Demaine anxiously.

"Oh yes," said Bailey, "I've been master here since the end of the first week. At first there was some doubt whether it was Elise or the groom or Parrett, the housekeeper, who was master. But I won, Dimmy," he said, rubbing his hands contentedly, "I brought down my servant Zachary and between us we won. They're as tame as pheasants now."

"Very well then," said Demaine, "you've got to do two things. You've got to cleanse me and to clothe me and to hide me during the next few hours if the necessity arises."

"I don't know why you shouldn't cleanse yourself," said William Bailey thoughtfully. "You've never learned a trade, Dimmy, and you were never handy or quick at things, but you're a grown man, and there's lots of hot water and soap and stuff in the bathroom; there was a beastly thing called a loofah that Merry had left there, but I've burned it."

"Don't be a fool, Bill!" pleaded Demaine, "there isn't time, really there isn't. Then tell me, what clothes have you?"

"Mine are too narrow in the shoulders for you," said William Bailey, thinking, "Zachary is altogether too thin. You're big, Dimmy, not to say fat. The trousers wouldn't meet and the coat wouldn't go on. But I can put you to bed and send for clothes. What d'you mean about hiding? I can see you have some reasons for privacy; in fact if you *hadn't*, getting up that chimney would be a schoolboy sort of thing to do at your age. Have you been bathing without a licence, and some

one stolen your clothes? Or have they been having a jolly rag at the Buteleys'? They're close by."

"I'll tell you when I've washed," said Demaine wearily, "only now do let me slip up to the bathroom like a good fellow. Good God, I'm tired!"

William Bailey opened the door and peered cautiously into the corridor, listened for footsteps and heard none, and then, after locking the door of the study behind him, as was his ridiculous habit, he popped up a narrow pair of stairs, with Dimmy, whose old nature had sufficiently returned to cause him to stumble, following at his heels.

They were not quite out of the range of the front door when there came a violent pull at the bell, and Elise went forward to open it.

William Bailey pushed his guest and cousin into the bathroom and went down to meet two policemen who stood with awful solemnity, clothed in suspicion and in power, at his threshold. From the depths of his sanctuary and through the crack of the half-open window, Demaine heard a conversation that did not please him.

"Very sorry to have to ask you, sir," a deep bass was saying, "we're bound to do it."

"We're bound to do it," echoed a tenor.

Demaine did not hear his cousin's reply.

"Are you sure he's been on the premises, sir?" came from the first policeman, whom I will call "*Basso Profondo.*"

"Positive," answered William Bailey's voice, cheerful and loud. "Positive!"

"Did you see him with your own eyes, sir?" this from the second policeman, whom I will call "*Tenore Stridente.*"

"Certainly I did, or I wouldn't be telling you this," came again from William Bailey a little testily.

"Well now, sir, we've suspicions that he's on the place still."

"You're wrong there," said William Bailey, "he

ran off down the Parham road when he heard my dog bark."

"We didn't meet any one on the Parham road, sir:" it was the voice of the Tenore policeman who spoke, evidently a less ingenious man than the Basso.

"I can't help that," said William Bailey. "You're welcome to look over the house."

They thanked him and walked in like an army.

"It is for your own good, sir," said the first policeman, in his deep bass.

"Besides which it's our duty," said the second policeman in his *tenore stridente*.

"Of course," said William Bailey, "of course, and I hope that while one of you is doing the good, the other will look after the duty. It's the kind of thing people like me are very fond of doing, hiding stowaways. I've hidden bushels of them."

The tenor was indifferent to his sarcasm, the bass was touched.

"You know very well, sir," he said, "what the criminal classes are, or rather you gentlemen don't know. Why, he'd cut the women's throats in the night and make off with the valuables."

"Would he cut mine?" asked William Bailey as he followed them from room to room.

"He's capable of it," said the bass, nodding mysteriously. "He's not an ordinary stowaway," he continued, lowering his voice almost to a gruff whisper, "*he's well known to the police.* He's *Stappy*, that's what he is, STAPPY THE CLINKER! He's done this trick before, getting aboard a vessel and pretending he's a vagabun; the Chief knows all about him! He did a man in last Monday night in London!"

To the unhappy man in the bathroom there returned with vivid horror the recollection of Lewes Gaol; but so long as William Bailey's wits did not fail him he knew that more than even chances were in his favour. His

mood changed suddenly, however, when the police, who had been perambulating the small rooms near his retreat, suddenly rattled the door of his bathroom and said :

" What's in here ? "

" I do beg of you to take care, gentlemen," said William Bailey angrily, " that's the bathroom, and if you want to know, my niece is inside."

" Oh I beg your pardon," said the bass, " I'm sure." He had the sense not to doubt the master of the house in a matter directly concerning his own interest. But the tenor added :

" We must make a note of it, sir."

" By all means," said William Bailey, " by all means. Her name is Rebecca."

George Mulross Demaine, in the delight of the very warm water, was soothed to hear them tramping heavily down the stairs once more.

They examined every room and cranny of the place until they came to the study door.

" It's my study," said William Bailey apologetically, " I always keep it locked."

He unlocked it and they entered. Their trained eyes could see nothing unusual in the aspect of the room until the tenor inadvertently putting his hand upon the back of the arm-chair discovered it to be both wet and to the taste salt. He had found a clue ! In a voice of excitement unworthy of his office, the intelligent officer shouted :

" We've got 'im sir, we've got 'im ! He's been here ! Look—sea water. We've got 'im ! " He looked round wildly as though expecting to see the runaway appear suddenly in mid-air between the floor and the ceiling.

" It is certainly most disconcerting," said William Bailey in evident alarm. " But wait a minute. Perhaps he came in here from the garden to see what he could get, found the door locked on the outside and made out

through the garden again; that would explain everything."

"No it wouldn't sir," said the bass respectfully, "it wouldn't explain *that*." And his mind, which, if slower than his colleague's, was prone to sound conclusions, pointed his hand to the wreck of the fire, to the heaps of soot that lay upon it, and the disturbance of the fender.

"He's gone up the chimney, that's what he's done," said the tenor.

"That's what he's done," said the bass, putting the matter in his own way, "he's gone up the chimney."

William Bailey put his head in and looked up the flue, the top of which was a little square of blue June sunlight above. "I don't see him," said he.

The constables, one after the other, solemnly performed the same feat.

"A man couldn't get up that," said Bailey stoutly.

"Ah, *Stappy* could," said the bass in a tone of one who talks of an old acquaintance, "Stappy could get out of anywhere, or through anything! He's a wonderful man, sir!"

Suddenly the tenor solved the whole business.

"He's on the roof!" he said.

Nothing would suit them but ladders must be brought, and they must climb upon the slates, while William Bailey, consoling himself with the thought that the property was not his, took the opportunity of dashing up to the bathroom and banging at the door.

"Dimmy, Dimmy!" he whispered loudly, "Dimmy, get out."

"I'm all wet," said Dimmy.

"You're used to that," said Bailey unfeelingly. "Dry your feet. Never mind the rest. Quick!" He threw a dressing-gown in, and Dimmy, as clean as Sunday morning, emerged.

"Are your feet quite dry, Dimmy?"

"Yes," said that great Commoner, still a trifle ruffled.

"Well then, let me think. . . . Go in there."

He pushed Demaine into a little writing-room that gave out of the corridor.

"Now then, go to that little table and sit perfectly tight. Do as I tell you and you are saved. Depart - by - but - one - iota - from - my - specific - instructions - and though you'll ultimately be redeemed by your powerful relatives from the ignominy of incarceration, you cannot fail to become a laughing-stock before your fellow-citizens! Do you take me, Dimmy?"

Dimmy, who like the rest of the family was never quite certain whether William Bailey's final outbreak into downright lunacy might not take place at any moment, suddenly sat where he was bid, and his cousin returned within thirty seconds bearing a woman's walking cloak and a respectable bonnet which, I regret to say, were those of Parret herself. Bailey huddled the cloak upon the younger man, banged the bonnet upon his head, tied the ribbons under his chin, disposed his person with the back to the door, in the attitude of one writing a note, and said:

"Dimmy, could you talk in a high voice?"

"No, I can't!" said Dimmy.

"Try. Say 'Oh don't, I'm busy.'"

"I can't!" said Dimmy again.

"Great heavens! is there no limit to the things you can't do?" said William Bailey testily. "Try."

At a vast sacrifice of that self-respect which was his chiefest treasure, Dimmy uttered the grotesque words in a faint falsetto.

"Excellent!" said William Bailey. "Now when you hear the word 'Rebecca' that's your cue. Say it again."

The second step is easier than the first, and Dimmy this time replied at once, the falsetto quite just: "Oh don't, I'm busy." And William Bailey was satisfied.

By this time the policemen could be heard scrambling down from the roof; they had found nothing, which, seeing that the roof was in shape exactly pyramidical, was not wonderful.

"Well, he's gone, sir," said the bass a little relieved.

"We must see the bathroom before we leave, though," added the tenor fixedly.

"By all means," said William Bailey, "if it's empty," he added with a decent reserve.

They went upstairs and on their way he opened the writing-room door, and said:

"Oh, there she is. Rebecca!"

"Oh don't worry me, I'm busy," boomed in a manly voice from the seated figure.

"Sorry I'm sure sir," said the tenor, who was now sincerely apologetic. "We have no desire to disturb the lady, but it was our duty."

"Of course," said William Bailey hurriedly, "of course," and he shut the door, mentally renewing his profound faith in the imbecility of political life.

The active and intelligent officers of the law gazed mechanically round the bathroom; they were too modest to examine a certain damp heap of black cloth that was flung huddled into a corner. They went out with every assurance that they would not have disturbed Mr. Bailey for a moment had they not been compelled by that sense of duty to their country to which they had already so frequently alluded.

William Bailey accompanied them to the gate, in the fixed desire to see them off the place, and with a heartfelt silent prayer that Parrett would not go into the writing-room until he had returned.

As they reached the gate the bass, who remembered the necessity for subscriptions to local clubs, charities and balls, and especially to the Policemen's balls, charities and clubs, said once more that he hoped Mr. Bailey understood they had only done their duty.

"Of course," he added, "we know Mr. Merry very well, and we take it you're a friend of his."

"Yes sir," said the tenor more severely, "and we know who you are. We know everybody in the place, sir. It's our business. We know what they do, where they come from and where they go to. They can't escape us."

With this cheerful assurance the bass and the tenor both slightly saluted, and the gate shut behind them.

Outside the gate a little crowd consisting of the two sailor-men, a dirty officer of the mercantile marine, three young boys, a draggle-tailed village girl, and a spaniel, awaited the return of the police, and when it was known that they had drawn blank, this little crowd paradoxically enough gave cry. Each was now as certain that he had seen the fugitive in some one of a hundred opposing and impossible directions as he had formerly been determined that the refugee was still concealed in Mr. Merry's house.

William Bailey hurried back: he went straight to the writing-room. He thanked heaven that no one had disturbed Rebecca. Without an apology he rapidly untied the ribbons of the bonnet, hoicked off the cloak and was bearing them back to Parrett's room when he heard the voice of that admirable female raised in hot remonstrance against the misdeeds of a domestic.

In tactics as in strategy there is a disposition known as the offensive-defensive. William Bailey was familiar with it. He adopted it now, and in a voice that silenced every other sort, he roared his complaint that the servants perpetually left their clothes hanging about at random right and left all over the house.

"Whose is this?" he demanded, pointing to the cloak and bonnet where he had flung them sprawling on a chair.

"It's mine, sir," said Parrett with considerable dignity.

"Oh it is, is it?" said Bailey a little mollified. "I'm sorry, Parrett. If I'd known it was yours I'd have spoken to you privately."

"I never left them there, sir!" said Parrett all aruffle with indignation.

"I never said you did, I never said you did. It's none of my business. I don't care who left them there; but I will have this house *orderly* or I will not have it at *all*," with which enigmatical sentence for the further discipline of Merry's impossible household, he went back to Demaine in his dressing-gown and brought him through the corridor to the study.

"Now my dear fellow," he said, "are you cold?"

"Yes," said Dimmy.

"Are you hungry?"

"Yes," said Dimmy.

"Are you thirsty?"

"I am very tired," said Dimmy.

"Very well, then, you shall eat and drink. I will try and light the fire.

He did so and the room, which was already warm with the June sun, became like an oven. As he rose from his chair Demaine said in some anxiety: "For heaven's sake don't send for the servants!"

"I'm not going to," said William Bailey simply. He went to a cupboard and brought out some ham, a loaf and a bottle of wine.

Demaine ate and drank. When he had eaten and drunk he could hardly support himself for fatigue.

William Bailey took him to his own room and told him to sleep there. "I've established," he said, in a genial tone, "so healthy a reign of terror in this house that you certainly will not be disturbed if you sleep in my bed. I will see about the clothes."

And thus, after so many and so great adventures, George Mulross Demaine slept once again between sheets, in a bed well aired, in a room with reasonable pictures

upon the walls, and reasonable books upon the table, with blankets, with curtains, with pillows, with mahogany tallboys, with three kinds of looking-glasses, with an eider-down quilt, with a deep carpet, with a silver reading lamp, soothed by a complete cleanliness and in a word, amid all that the governing classes have very properly secured for themselves during their short pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world.

CHAPTER XIII.

ALL through that hot noon and down the beginning of the sun's decline, George Mulross slept heavily; he slept as in a death, in Parham.

He slept in the house of Carolus Merry Armiger, under the shield and tutelage of William Bailey, eccentric, and with God's benediction upon him. His troubles were at an end.

Meanwhile in London, the young and popular Prime Minister had received his secretary's report. The *Moon* and the *Capon* were squared.

How squared he was too busy to inquire. Gold and silver he had none—for those purposes at least—that would not be in the best traditions of our public life: but they *were* squared: Edward assured him they were squared, and there was an end of it.

There was more even than Edward's assurance, though that was as solid as marble; there were two early copies of the papers themselves which had been ordered and brought to him. The leader of the one dealt with those eternal Concessions in Burma, and he smiled. There was not a word about Repton. The leader of the other was on Fiddlededee, and the Prime Minister experienced an immense relief.

But there was still Demaine,—or rather, there was still no Demaine. And there was still Repton, mad—mad—mad!

Between Dolly and the awful unstable equilibrium

of the modern world, between him and a cosmic explosion was nothing but the four walls round Repton, Lady Repton who bored him, and the sagacity of Edward. It was a quarter to three, a time when meaner men must wend them to the House of Commons. He also wended. He was the shepherd and he must look after his sheep.

That august assembly was astonished to perceive the Premier positively present upon the front bench during the process of that appeal to the Almighty which precedes the business of the day. But *that* did not get into the papers :—there is a limit !

As he knelt there he knew that a man whom he could not disobey was about to ask a question of which he had given private notice. He feared it much, he more feared those supplementary questions which are so useless to the scheme of our polity but which buzz like unnecessary midges round the cooking of the national food. And when prayers were over and questions begun, not an inquiry as to an Admiralty contract, not a simple demand for information from the Home Secretary as to the incarceration of a beggar or the torture of some insignificant pauper, but put his heart into his mouth.

Mr. Maloney's long cross-examination on the matter of the postmistress at Crosshaurigh gave him a little breathing space. They couldn't bring Repton or Demaine in on that ! But there was an ominous question about a wreck, and who should answer it ? He had indeed arranged that the answer should proceed from the Treasury, but the clouds were lowering.

The question came as mild as milk : it was concerned with the wreck which still banged and battered about on the Sovereign Shoals ; it had been put down days before, and the chief legal adviser of the Crown rose solemnly to reply.

" My right honourable friend has asked me to answer this question. He has no further information beyond that which he has already furnished to the honourable

gentleman, but every inquiry is being made and papers will shortly be laid upon the table of the House."

The fanatic rose, the inevitable fanatic, towering from the benches, and thundered his supplementary demand: What had been done with the gin? He was told to give notice of the question.

For three dreadful seconds the Prime Minister feared some consequence. His fears were well grounded. A gentleman rose and spoke from the darkness under the gallery and desired to know why the *Warden of the Court of Dowry* was not present to deal with matters concerning his Department? He would have been reproved by the Chair had not the young and popular Prime Minister taken it upon himself to rise and reply.

"It is the first time," he said, "and I hope it will be the last, that I have heard the illness of a colleague made the excuse for such an interruption."

From the benches behind him those who knew the truth applauded and those who did not applauded more loudly still.

With what genius had he not saved the situation! And the questions meandered on, and all was well, save for that last dreadful query of which he had had private notice.

It was put at the end of question-time, not, oddly enough, by the member who most coveted the apparently vacant Wardenship, nor even by any relative of that member, nay, not even by a friend: a member surely innocent of all personal motives put that question. He desired to know whether rumours appearing in the papers upon the Wardenship of the Court of Dowry were well founded, whether the Wardenship of the Court of Dowry were not for the moment vacant, and if so what steps were being taken to fill that vacancy.

The reply was curt and sufficient: "The honourable member must not believe everything he reads in the newspapers."

"It is not often that wit of a lightning kind falls zigzag and blasts the efforts of anarchy in the National Council. Wit is very properly excluded from the exercise of legislative power; but when it appears—when there is good reason for its appearance—its success is overwhelming: and by the action of this one brilliant phrase, perhaps the most dangerous crisis through which the Constitution has passed since the flight of James II. was triumphantly passed.

Question-time was over. The young and popular Prime Minister, now wholly oblivious of his left lung, answered one or two minor questions, gave assurances as to the order of business, and left the House a happier man than he had entered it. He went straight to Downing Street. When he got to his room Edward was there awaiting him.

"They've got Demaine," he said.

The luck had turned!

For half a minute Dolly couldn't speak: then he gasped.

"Where?"

"I don't know," said Edward. "I don't think anybody knows. There was a telephone message sent to the Press everywhere."

A thousand horrid thoughts! Found dead? Found wandering and imbecile? Found——? He was faster bound than ever—and that just in the hour when he must act and decide. He said again:

"Where did it come from?"

"I couldn't find out."

"Edward," said the Premier faintly, as he sat down and fell to pieces, "you know how to do these things . . . Puff!— . . . Do go like . . . a good fellow—find out . . . quietly . . . ch . . . *where* it came from."

Edward went into the next room and called up 009 Central. He was given 1009, kept his temper and repeated his call. A Being replied to him in an angry

woman's voice and begged him not to shout into the receiver.

He asked for the clerk in charge and waited ten minutes. Nothing happened.

The Prime Minister in his room was not at ease. His mood was if anything burdened by the delivery of an express message which ran: "They've found Dimmy. M. S." The writing was the writing of Mary Smith. He asked the messenger with some indifference to find out who had sent the message and where it had come from.

Meanwhile, in the absence of Edward, he went into an outer room and begged them to call up Mrs. Smith's house. When he returned there was a telegram from Charing Cross upon his table which ran:

"George found."

There was no signature. He waited patiently for the return of Edward or the messenger or of something—hang it all, *something!*

The little buzzer on his table buzzed gently and the telephone whispered into his ear that "Mrs. Demaine wished him to know that Mr. Demaine was found." He had already asked "Where is he?" when he was cut off.

He had received so much information and no more when Edward returned with the information that the news had come in from Trunk Seven.

"What is Trunk Seven?" asked the Prime Minister.

"I don't know," said Edward.

They sat together for a moment in silence. The Premier, as befitted his office, was a man of resource. Outside Westminster Bridge Underground Station men of insufficient capital but of economic ambition deal in the retail commerce of news. It occurred to the Prime Minister to reassure himself from their posters, and from a room that gave upon Westminster Bridge Road, his excellent eyesight—for it was among his points that his

eyesight at fifty-four was still strong—perused the placards opposite.

They were clear enough.

"LOST MINISTER FOUND"

said the most decent.

"DEMAINE RESULT"

said the *Capon*, which appeared to have forgotten its good manners.

It ought not to be difficult to get the *Capon* without loss of dignity. He returned to his room and in about five minutes the *Capon* was brought to him.

Under the heading "Stop Press News," he saw "Demaine Result," and then underneath, more courteously: "Mr. Demaine has been heard of." It was printed in faint wobbly type in a big blank space—and there was nothing more.

Edward, entering at that moment, told him that the exact point from which the message had been sent could not be discovered until Brighton had cleared.

"Oh!" said the Prime Minister.

He was going to call up Mary Smith, but Edward assured him that nothing more than an inept half-wit maid would answer the demand—he had tried it.

Dolly sat on in patience and wondered where Demaine had been discovered. The matter was of some moment. Without the least doubt he would have to make up his mind as to the succession of the office that very afternoon, and it was already close on five.

Demaine might be discovered suffering from a loss of memory (though what he had to remember Dolly couldn't conceive); he might have been discovered in the hands of the police. He might have been discovered attempting for some unknown reason to fly the country. Till the Premier knew more he could not act.

For a good half-hour he persuaded himself that it was better to wait. Then he went out and motored to Mary's.

And Mary of course was not at home.

He went on to Demaine House, and found there nothing but a man making a very careful inventory of all the pictures, all the furniture and all the glass. He came back to his room, and at last the mystery was solved.

All good things come to an end, as do all delays and all vexations, and life itself. By a method less expeditious than some of those which modern civilisation has put at our disposal, the full truth was revealed to him.

George Mulross Demaine was at that moment (it was six o'clock) upon that afternoon of Wednesday, the 3rd of June, . . . drinking brandy and soda in great quantities and refusing tea, at the Liverpool Street Hotel. A courteous message from the Manager thereof was the source of the information, and Edward—Edward who never failed—had been the first to receive it.

The message had gone up and down London a good deal before it had got to the House of Commons; at Demaine House the Manager had been told to try Mary Smith's number, and at Mary Smith's the half-wit having almost had her head blown off by Edward's repeated violence, very sensibly suggested that the Manager should telephone direct to the House of Commons and give a body peace.

An instant demand (said Edward) that Demaine should himself come to the instrument had been followed by a very long pause, after which he was told that the gentleman had gone off in a four-wheeler with a lame horse, and had left the bill unpaid.

There was nothing to do but to wait.

Half-past six struck, and the quarter. Their fears were renewed when, just upon seven, a figure strangely but neatly clothed was shown into the room, by a servant who displayed such an exact proportion between

censure and respect as would have puzzled the most wearisome of modern dramatists to depict.*

It was Demaine!

His clothes were indeed extraordinary. You could not say they fitted, and you could not say they did not fit. The trousers and the coat and the waistcoat were made of one cloth, a quiet yellow. The lines of the shoulders, the arms, the legs, the very stomach, were right lines: they were lines proceeding from point to point; they were lines taking the shortest route from point to point. They were straight: they were plumb straight. The creases upon the trousers were not those adumbrations of creases which the most vulgar of the smart permit to hint at the newness of their raiment: they were solid ridges resembling the roofs of new barns or the keels of racing ships. The lapels of the coat did not sit well upon it; rather they were glued to it. The waistcoat did not fit, it stuck. And above this strange accoutrement shone, with more fitness than Edward and Dolly could have imagined, the simple face of George Mulross Demaine.

His hair—oh horror!—was oiled; one might have sworn that his face was oiled as well.

The colour of his skin resembled cedarwood save on the nose, where it resembled old oak. If ever a man was fit, that man was George Mulross, but if ever a man was changed, George Mulross was also that man.

"Sit down," said the Prime Minister delightedly, "Oh my dear George, sit down!"

"I can't," said George, using that phrase perhaps for the twentieth time during the last forty-eight hours. "They're ready-made," he explained, blushing (as Homer beautifully puts it of Andromache) through his tan. "I didn't sit down in the train and I didn't sit down in the cab."

* I refer to Mr. Bulge, and I refer to him both as an actor and as an author. Amen.

"Where have you been, George?" asked the Prime Minister.

"I've had an adventure," said George modestly.

"But hang it all, where have you *been?*"

"I've been to sea," said George.

"Oh-h-h-h-h-h!" said the Prime Minister.

"Beastly luck, isn't it?" said George simply.

"It's worse than that," said Edward grimly.

"Why?" asked George with something like fright upon his honest if oleaginous face.

"Well, never mind," said Dolly. "It must have been pretty tough. Were you blown out to sea?"

George Mulross Demaine's only reply was to feel inside his coat for the place where pockets are often constructed for the well-to-do, but where no pocket seemed to exist. He made five or six good digs for it, but it was not there. He looked up huntedly and said: "Wait a minute." He put his hand into his waistcoat. There again there was no receptacle, but that which should have held his watch—and even the young idealism of the Prime Minister permitted him to wonder why no watch was there Then George did what I hope no member of the governing class had ever done before—he felt in his trousers pocket, and thence he pulled out a bit of paper.

"Yes," he said, concealing the writing from them. "You're quite right. I *was* blown out to sea. I had a"—(here he peered closely at the paper and apparently could not make out a word). "Oh yes," he said, "a terrible time." His diction was singularly monotonous. "I - thought - I - should - never - have - survived - that - terrible - night. A - foreign - ship - passed me - but - the - scoundrels - left - me - to - my - fate I - was - nearly - dead - when - under - the - first - rays of - morning - I - saw - the - British - flag - and - my heart - leaped - within - me."

Edward, though not usually impetuous, bereft him

of the document, and as he did so the Prime Minister saw the square firm characters.

"Good lord!" shouted the Premier, "It's Bill!"

And it *was* the writing of William Bailey.

"William's been very good to me, if you mean that," said Demaine reproachfully.

The Prime Minister burst into the first hearty laugh he had enjoyed in fifteen years. After all, men like Bailey were of some use in the world!

In spite of Dimmy's obvious choler, with the tears of laughter in his eyes, and interrupted by little screams of merriment, the Prime Minister completed the reading.

"'I bit my arm, I sucked the blood, I cried "A sail! a sail!"; and in less time than it takes to read this, hearty English hands were tugging at the oars.' ("Oh Edward, Edward!" gasped the exhausted man, and when he had recovered his breath continued:) "With the tenderness almost of a woman he lifted . . .'("Who lifted you?" he asked between his shrieks and wagging his forefinger to George Demaine. "Oh George, who lifted you?") . . . 'He lifted me on board the good ship *Lily*, and when I told him of the treacherous action of the foreigners, muttered "Scoundrel" between his teeth. But a man has naught to fear when the brave hearts of his countrymen are his shield. They landed me at Lowestoft, pressing into my hands their petty savings, and left me with three hearty cheers that did me almost as much good as to feel my feet once more upon British soil."

The Prime Minister laid his head upon the table, wagged it gently from side to side, uttered a series of incongruous sounds, and very nearly broke down.

George Mulross Demaine was exceedingly angry.

"It may seem very funny to you," he began, "but——"

"Don't, George!" said the Premier, going off again, "Don't!"

But George was boiling. "How would you like it——" he began shouting. . . . When the door opened and there was announced with extreme solemnity Mr. Pickle, Mr. Hogge, Mr. Gracechurch, Mr. Fuell, Mr. Nydd, Sir John Clegg, Lord Cuthbertson, and last but by no means least, Mr. Howll. . . .

One would have said that nothing had happened. There were three doors to the room—as is proper to every room in which farces are played.

Through one of these Edward very gently led the stiff but still burning George.

Through the second appeared an official gentleman commonly present at interviews of this kind.

Through the third the deputation had entered: and the young and popular Prime Minister, all sympathy, all heart, all ears, all teeth, all intelligence, heard such an indictment of the maladministration of Spitzbergen by the infamous King of Bohemia as he had perhaps not listened to more than thirty-eight times during the course of the last two years.

Edward took George by the arm through room after room, down a corridor, into a hall, then as though by magic an excellent motor appeared.

They got in, Edward still making himself perfectly charming, Dimmy in a constrained attitude stretched tangentially to the edge of the seat, and the motor drove them for a very great number of miles, during which journey Edward learned all the main story; the robbery, the refuge aboard ship, the escape, and the fortunate discovery of William Bailey.

George was given to understand with that method and insistence most proper to his character that *that* story had better be forgotten and that only *what* he had been given to read—and only the gist of that—might very well be published to his wife and to the world . . .

It was an understood matter. George did now and

then like to row and fish; a friend had asked him to run down to Port Victoria—it was only an hour; the friend hadn't turned up. George only meant to go out for a minute, put up the sprits'l like a fool, got blown right away in front of a so'wester into the Swin; then the wind going round a point-o'-two got blown, begad, right over the Gunfleet. High tide luckily, and the rest naturally followed.

These nautical experiences filled George with doubts.

"There wasn't any so'wester," he said with bovine criticism.

"You silly ass," said Edward, "who notices a thing like that in London?"

"You'd notice it at sea," said George with profound conviction.

"Anyhow, unless you want a good story against you to the end of your life, you've got to be outside for thirty-six hours, and you've got to land a damn long way off from Parham—I can tell you that!" said Edward firmly.

And George agreed.

They dined together at Richmond, which suburban town they had reached by Edward's directions, and George, replete after so much suffering, became most genial. He betrayed in his conversation the fact that Sudie might or might not know the truth; he had not dared to communicate with her. William Bailey had done so after getting his new clothes, but there had been no one at home. There was only a man in, making an inventory, and the footman thought the message had something to do with him. What Sudie might have heard from others he didn't know.

"Where did the telephone message come from?" asked Edward, who remembered the torturing anxiety of his Chief upon that point which now seemed so futile.

"I don't know," George bleated, if I may use so

disrespectful a term of a man with £100 a week. "I really don't know He hired a motor, I know that, and he drove it himself."

"Oh he did, did he? Where did he drive it to?"

"To a station," said George lucidly.

"A long way off?" asked Edward.

"Oh dear!" said George, "Don't ask me. Right away over all sorts of places."

"Now, Demaine, listen," said Evans, concentrating. "Could you see the sea?"

"No," said George with a shudder.

"Could you see the river,—anything?"

"No," said George. "We got there at three, and William telephoned from the station."

"But damn it all!" cried Edward, "what was the name of the station?"

"I don't know," said George, "I didn't notice."

Edward tried another approach. "Were there houses round it?"

"Oh yes, lots," said George, "lots—and they had laurels, and there was a lot of gas lamp-posts, and there was a tramway—oh it was a beastly place!"

Then Evans understood, and Kent, the Garden of England, was in his mind: Kent and one of its deeply bosomed towns, Chislehurst haply or St. Mary Cray. "But why did you go to Liverpool Street when you got in at Cannon Street?" he said.

"How did you know I got in at Cannon Street?" asked George with wide-open eyes like a child who sees the secretly marked card come out of the pack.

"Never mind. Why did you go to Liverpool Street?"

"William told me to," answered George simply.

"You'll make a good front benchman," said Edward half to himself. "Do you know why he told you to go to Liverpool Street?"

"No," said George, "I don't. . . I don't know."

"Well," said Edward, as though conveying a pro-

found secret, "if ever you happen to be at Lowestoft, that's the way you get in to London."

"Oh, is it?" said George blankly.

"Where did he buy your clothes?" asked Edward suddenly, "what shop?"

"Oh, in Parham somewhere," said George, "I don't know where. I put 'em on before I started of course. I couldn't stay in a dressing-gown."

A thought occurred to Edward. He pulled back the collar of Demaine's coat, and saw marked upon a tape, 'Harrington Brothers, Parham." Without so much as asking his leave he cut the label.

"What's on the shirt?" he asked laconically.

George opened his waistcoat and looked. "Six sixty-six," he said.

"It is the mark of the beast," said Edward.

"Who do you mean?" said George bewildered. 'William Bailey lent it to me."

"If you'd told me that," said Edward, "I wouldn't have asked you what the mark was; and what's more, if you had told me the mark I could have told you the owner. Good lord!" he muttered, "what other man in England! . . . Had he hauled his Jewish Encyclopedia down there?" he suddenly turned round to ask.

"Yes," said George eagerly, "how did you know?"

"Oh nothing," said Edward, "only I know he is fond of it. Did you eat ham?"

"Yes," said George, thinking closely, "I did. Yes. I remember distinctly, I did."

The expression of Edward was completely satisfied.

The time had come for their return. George, whose carelessness about money had received very distinct and very severe shocks in the last few months—nay, in the last few days—insisted upon paying, and Edward, who knew more than was good for him, allowed him to pay: and further advised him to spend the morrow, Thursday, in bed. "At any rate," he concluded, "not

where the sharks can get at you. Wait till Dolly sends, and that'll be Friday, I know."

They drove back to Demaine House, and Sudie, having heard the news from half London, was left to deal with the truant as she saw fit.

As for Edward, he was back late at night in Downing Street, where bread-and-butter called him. But he found his chief with the mood of that happy afternoon long past, for, one encumbrance well discharged, the other did but the more gravely harass him, and the memory of Repton, of Repton doing he knew not what, —perhaps at that very moment wrecking any one of twenty political arrangements—tortured him beyond bearing.

But as the Premier had justly thought that afternoon, the tide had turned ; and when the tide turns in the fairway of a harbour, though it turns here and there with eddies and with doubt, at last it sets full, and so it was now with the fortunes of our beloved land and of its twentyfold beloved Cabinet.

Repton was at that very moment restored to his right mind—his Caryll's Ganglia were restored to their normal function—and would never tell the truth again.

CHAPTER XIV

ALL night Sir Charles Repton had tossed in an uneasy slumber; all night his faithful wife Maria had sat up watching him. She dared not trust a trained nurse; she dared not trust a single member of the household; for he muttered as he slept strange things concerning the governance of England, and stranger things concerning his own financial schemes.

At one moment, it was about half-past four in the morning,—much at the time when Demaine, seventy miles away, upon the bosom of the ocean, had woken to see the sun—his predecessor in the Wardenship of the Court of Dowry (and still the titular holder of that office) had started suddenly up in bed, and violently denounced a man with an Austrian name as having cheated him by obtaining prior information upon the Budget. He asked rapidly in his mania why Consols had gone up in the first week of April, and would not be pacified until his wife, with the tact that is born of affection, had assumed the role of the unpleasing foreigner and had confessed all. Then and then only was he pacified and fell into the first true sleep he had enjoyed for twenty-four hours. He slept until eleven, and she, brave woman that she was, snatched some little sleep at his side, but only upon the edge of sleep as it were, waking at any moment to shield him from the consequences of his disease.

When he woke she herself made it her duty to go downstairs and fetch him his breakfast, but though his

repose had recruited his body, his dear mind was still unhinged.

He would have it that the Royal Family when they invested in some concern were not registered under their true names, and he began a long wild rambling harangue about the death duties and some new story about yet another outlandish name, and the insufficiency of the taxes for which it was responsible. The whole thing was described in a manner so clear and sensible as added to the horror of the contrast between his sanity and that other dreadful mood.

By noon, still lying in his bed, he was contrasting to her wearied ear the cost of the Tubes in London as against those in Paris, and making jokes about "boring through the London clay." He went on to ask why a friend of his had drawn his salary as a Minister for some little time after his death, and suddenly went off at a tangent upon the noble self-sacrifice of Lord Axton in exiling himself to a tropic clime, threatening that unfortunate peer with certain bankruptcy and possible imprisonment unless a report upon the Bitsu Marsh were favourable. Then for a blessed half-hour he was silent.

At the end of it he called for a pen and paper, and wrote a number of short notes. Luckily he gave them to her to be posted; she read but a few, and with trembling hands she burned them all, even the stamps, though she knew how particular he had been in the old days on that detail.

He dressed and came down. She persuaded him —oh how lovingly,—to sit in his favourite room overlooking the Park. She forgot that it overlooked the crowded throng, and from close upon one until late in the afternoon this devoted angel clung to him while he poured out meaningless denunciations of all his world, up hill and down dale, relieved from time to time (a relief to him but not to her) by a sudden throwing up of the window, and an address to the passers-by.

He warned more than one omnibus as it passed, of an approaching combine between the various lines, and urged the shareholders to buy while yet there was time. At one awful moment he had begun excitedly to point out the figure of a Bishop upon the opposite pavement and to begin a full biography of that hierarch when she thought it her duty to slam down the window and to bear the weight of his anger rather than permit the scene.

Small knots of people gathered outside the house, but the police had been warned and they were easily dispersed, with no necessity for violence beyond the loss of a tooth or two on the part of the crowd.

As though her task were not enough, the house was full of the noise of bells, message after message calling for news and for information, but she had already given orders to the secretary to write out whatever commonplace messages might occur to him, and he faithfully performed his duty.

In her confusion she could see no issue but to try yet another night's sleep, and when he carried his hand to his head as he now and then did, when the touch of pain stung him, she comforted herself with this assurance, that a paroxysm of such violence could not long endure.

I say a paroxysm of such violence, though there was nothing violent in the man's demeanour: the horror lay in the cold contrast between the pleasant easy tone in which the things were said and the things that were said in that pleasant easy tone, while the violence was no more than the violence of contrast between his absurd affirmations and the quiet current of the national life.

The printing of one-tenth of those simple, easily delivered words might have ruined the country. We owe it to Lady Repton—and I trust it will never be forgotten—that no syllable of them all was printed,

and that the greater part of them were not even heard by any other ear than her own.

She had persuaded him to an early dinner; she had even put it at the amazing hour of half-past seven. She had ordered such food as she knew he best loved, and the wine that soothed him most— which happened to be a Norman champagne. She was particular to request a full service of attendance, for her experience told her that in such surroundings he was ever at his best.

Another attack of pain in the head seized him and passed. She sat doggedly, and endured. This admirable wife after her day-long watch was exhausted and heart-sick. She saw no issue anywhere. She sat by her husband's side, starting nervously at the least sound from below, and listening to his impossible commentaries upon contemporary life, his hair-raising stories of his friends, his colleagues and even of her own religious pastors, and his bouts of self-revelations, or rather let us hope, of diseased imaginings, when there was put into her hand an express letter.

The superscription was peculiar; it ran:

To the Rt. Hon.
To the
The Lady C. Repton, M.V.O.

She opened it in wonderment. Its contents were far simpler than its exterior: they ran as follows:

"MADAM,—Your husband's case noted as per enclosed cutting. I know what is wrong with him and I can cure him. My price is five hundred dollars ($500·00) one hundred pounds (£100). The operation is warranted not to take more than ten minutes of his valuable time.

"Will call upon you when you are through tea and he quite rested, somewheres round eight o'clock.

"Yrs. etc., SCIPIO KNICKERBOCKER."

Caught in the fold of this short note was a newspaper aragraph and a card printed in gold letters upon imi-ation ivory :

DR. SCIPIO KNICKERBOCKER, M.D.
415 Tenth St.
London, Ont.
And the Savoy Hotel.

Had she been alone she would have prayed for guidance. Eight o'clock, of all hours ! And what was " Ont." ? Drowning women catch at straws. Under no other onceivable circumstances would Lady Repton have aught at such a wretched straw as this. But the faculty ad deserted her, she had no remedy ; she saw, she new, everybody knew, that her husband was mad ; ie divined from twenty indications and especially from ie suddenness of the pain, that the madness was some mple case of mechanical pressure. And suppose this an really knew how to cure him ? She dared not ask er husband to put yet earlier the hour of his meal, at hich he had already grumbled ; beside which, it was oo late. The incomprehensible Scipio would arrive. She was still in an agony of doubt when she accom-anied her husband (who as he went down the stairs and ntered the dining-room was chatting gaily upon the mours of a prominent member of the Opposition) nd as their lonely meal proceeded in the presence of iose great over-dressed mutes, their servants, to all her ther anxieties was added her irresolution upon the rime question, whether she should or should not accept ie desperate aid of an utterly unknown man, perhaps n adventurer.

Just as Sir Charles had finished his soup, and with his amusing little story about the Baronetcy which ough it had been paid for by the son and heir (who was olvent) came out after all in the Birthday List as a nighthood,—just as he had finished his soup I say, he

gave a loud cry and put both hands to his head just behind the ears.

"Crickey how it hurts, William!" he remarked to the butler.

"Yes, Sir Charles," said the butler in the tone of a hierarch at his devotions.

"It's gone now," said the Baronet, with a sigh of relief, "but it *does* hurt when it comes! What's the fish?" and he continued his meal.

He drank a great gulp of wine and was better. . . . "It's dry," he said doubtfully, "it's too dry . . . but there are advantages to *that*. You know why they make wine dry, William?"

"Yes, Sir Charles."

"Oh! you do, do you? You're getting too smart. You couldn't tell me, I'll bet brazils!"

"No, Sir Charles."

"Why," said Repton with a merry wink, "it's to save your mouth next morning!" Then up went his hands to his head again and he groaned.

"Is your head hurting you again, darling?" said Lady Repton when she saw the gesture repeated.

"Yes, damnably," said Sir Charles in a loud tone. "It's hurting just under both ears, just where Sambo gave . . . ah! that's better . . . (a gasp) . . . gave the Tomtit that nasty one in the big fight I went to see last week—the night I telephoned home to say that I was kept at the House," he added by way of explanation.

The servants stood around like posts, and Lady Repton endured her agony.

"I think what I should have enjoyed most," mused Sir Charles after this revelation, "would have been to run across old Prout just as I came out of that Club. Not that he knows anything about such things, but still it was a pretty lousy place. Besides which, the people I was with! It would have been fun to see old Prout sit up. Shouldn't wonder if he'd refused to let me speak

at the Parson's Show after that ; and in *that* case," ended Sir Charles significantly tapping his trousers pocket "there'd be an end to the wherewith!" He nodded genially to his wife. "There'd be a drying up of the needful! Wouldn't there, William?" he suddenly demanded of the gorgeous domestic, who was at that moment pouring him out some wine.

"Yes, Sir Charles," said the hireling in a tone of the deepest respect.

"That's what keeps 'em going, my dear," he said, "and here's to you," he added, lifting his glass. "Are you put out about something?" he said, with real kindness in his voice.

"It's nothing, it's nothing," said that really Christian woman, nearly bursting into tears.

"I'm really very sorry if I've hurt your feelings in any way, my dear," said Charles Repton.

No sympton of his malady was more distressing than this unmanly softness, it was so utterly different from his daily habit.

"I'd never dream of wounding her ladyship intentionally ; would I, William?" he asked again.

"No, Sir Charles," said William.

"I think we'd better go upstairs dear," said the unfortunate lady. "Oh dear!" she sighed as a sudden peal rang through the house, and then subsiding she said : "Oh, it's only a bell!"

"Her ladyship's nervous to-night, William," said Repton as one man should to another.

"Yes, Sir Charles," repeated William in a grave monotone.

A card was brought in upon a salver of enormous dimensions and of remarkable if hideous workmanship.

Lady Repton recognised the name.

"I must go out a moment. I'll be back in a moment, Charles." She looked at him with a world of anxiety and affection, and left him chatting gaily to the servant.

Scipio Knickerbocker stood without.

Any doubts upon the matter were settled not only by his appearance but by his first phrase which ran in a singular intonation:

"Lady *C.* Repton? I am Scipio Knickerbocker, M.D. (Phillipsville), Ma'am,"—and he bowed. He was an exceedingly small man; he wore very long hair beautifully parted in the middle; his jaw was so square, deep and thrust forward as to be a positive malformation, but to convey at the same time an impression of indomitable will, not to say mulish obstinacy. His arms and legs were evidently too thin for health, and the development of his chest was deplorable. He was dressed in exceedingly good grey cloth, but his collar, oddly enough, was of celluloid. His buttoned boots were of patent leather, his tie had been tied once and for ever, and sewed into the shape it bore. He carried in his left hand an ominous little black leather bag.

"Come into this room," said Lady Repton hurriedly. She took him into a small room next to the dining-room, and communicating with it by a little door; she switched on the electric light and stood while she asked him breathlessly what credentials he had.

"Ma'am," said the physician in a metallic staccato, "I hev no credentials. What I propose to-night will be my sole credential."

In the silence before her reply, Sir Charles' merry monologue, occasionally broken by the grave assent of the butler, could be heard in the next room.

"What do you say you can do?" she asked.

"Ma'am, let me first tell *you* right 'now what the Senator's gotten wrawng with him. In nineteen fourteen, month of September, I could not hev told you; but in nineteen fourteen, month of October, I could: fur your dsitinguished British physicist *and* biologist, Henry Upton, then pro-mulgated his eppoch-making discovery. You hev hurd tell of Caryll's Ganglia?"

"No," said Lady Repton nervously, and in a quavering voice, "I have not."

"Ma'am," said the Imperial authority with perfect composure, "I hev them here."

He dived into his bag and produced a little card on which was perfectly indicated the back of the human head, only with the skin and hair removed; two lumps on either side of the neck of this diagram bore in large red letters, "Caryll's Ganglia," and two white lines leading from them bore in smaller type, "Caryll's Ducts."

This card he gravely put into her hands. She looked at it with some disgust: it reminded her of visits to the butcher's during the impecuniosity of her early married life.

When, as the Son of Empire fondly imagined, his hostess had thoroughly grasped the main lines of cerebral anatomy, he suddenly thrust his hand into the bag again and pulled out a little pamphlet, which, as it is carefully printed at the end of this book and as the reader will most certainly skip it, I shall not inflict upon her in this place.

It was a reproduction, in portable form, of the great lecture delivered in the January of that year at the Royal Institute. It set forth the late Henry Upton's discovery that Caryll's Ganglia were the seat of self-restraint and due caution in the Human Brain.

The poor woman was too bewildered to make head or tail of it, and whether the reader give herself the pains to peruse it or no is indifferent, for its contents in no way affect this powerful and moving tale.

"Madame," he said when she lifted her eyes from it and as he fondly imagined had mastered its details, —"you do not perhaps see the con-nection."

Her face assured him that she did not.

"Neither," he added grandiloquently, "did the world, until I perceived that if indeed such functions attached to Caryll's Ganglia, why the least obstruction

of their ducts would condemn the sufferer to occasional violent pain accompanied by such inability to refrain from expression as must ruin his career and ultimately make a wreck of his bodily frame. Madame, cases of such obstruction I hev found to hev occurred in the ducts. Madame, *I* discovered by what slight touch of the lancet the tiny *im*pediment could be instantly removed. Madame," he continued, " the Caryll's ducts in Sir Charles' head are ob-structed, hence the recurrent pain and the lamentable attack of VERACITITIS from which he in-dub-it-ab-ly suffers.

" Velossy what ? " gasped Lady Repton.

" *Veracititis*, Ma'am. The phrase is my own ; for it is I who have identified the relation between the ganglia and the distressing symptons you have observed. He stands before you, *he* does. Madame, it is already enshrined in the proofs of the Columbia Encyclopedia " —he dived once more into his bag and handed her yet another paper—" as *Veracititis Knickerbockeriensis*. In Ontario since Washington's Birthday, we hev hed three cases ; I was called over privately a month ago for a most distressing case, luckily suppressed—never hurd of Madame, outside the family. I hev operated with success. Ma'am, I can operate with success upon your husband."

At this moment a loud scream of pain from the next room, followed by a gasp of relief and the expletive " Great Cæsar's Ghost ! " almost decided Sir Charles' faithful spouse. Another scream that proved the spasms to be increasing in violence quite decided her. She hurriedly re-entered the dining-room, found Sir Charles white with the severity of the suffering, and took him gently by the hand.

" Dailing," she said, " I have a practitioner who can relieve this. He is waiting for you."

" Oh," sighed Sir Charles, as the pain left him, " I'm glad to hear it, profoundly glad. They're all such

scoundrels, Maria, . . . but if he's a surgeon and can cut something out, I'll trust him."

"It won't be as bad as that," said Maria, tenderly helping the Baronet out through the small door towards the inner room.

Hardly had he set his eyes on the little doctor when he burst into a hearty laugh.

"What a ridiculous little ass, Maria!" he said at the top of his voice. "Good lord, what a little rat!"

If proof were wanted of the truth of Scipio's contention, his demeanour at this painful moment was sufficient. It was plainly evident to Lady Repton's not insufficient dose of intellect that no man would have stood firm who had not seen the ghastly disease in its worst form before.

"Well," said Sir Charles, "so you're going to cut me up, are you?"

"Oh! *My* no!" said Scipio. "Lady Repton would never hev permitted a serious operation without your full concurrence. My proposition, Senator, is nawthing but two slight pricks in the neighbourhood of the pain. Ye'll hardly feel it, but it'll change ye," added the determined Knickerbocker with a suspicion of a smile upon his bony jaws.

"What with?" said Sir Charles a little nervously. ("Ouch!" by way of digression as there was a stab of pain.) "Yes, anything, s'long as you can do it quickly."

"It don't take but a moment," said Scipio. "But there'd better be some one hold your hands. There's no pain worth accountin.'"

"Might we re-quest the Senator to be seated?" he politely suggested to the lady.

Sir Charles as politely commented: "I'm not a Senator, you skimpy little fool! Good lord, Maria, where do people like that come from?"

And as he chatted thus, Scipio passed one firm hard

skeleton hand over the top of that great brain, and with the other, even as Sir Charles, with his chin bent upon his chest, was occupied in explaining to Maria the physical deficiencies of his medical attendant, he put the edge of the lancet in the precise position behind the ear which his science had discovered.

"It's his beastly Yankee accent, if it isn't that beastlier thing, the Australian," the great Imperialist was in the act of saying when the lancet struck suddenly and was as suddenly withdrawn.

"You're quite right, monkey," said Sir Charles in a weaker voice, "it's only a prick, and I think"—his voice still sinking,—"that it's only due to your great position in the medical world that I should express my heartfelt thanks for your courteous services. It is men like you, sir, who mean to suffering humanity . . ." Sir Charles suddenly stopped. His voice grew a little louder. "Did you say he was a Yankee or an Australian, Maria? Australians have the Cockney 'a'; a filthy thing it is, too!"

The skeleton hand was poised again upon Sir Charles' head; he felt his chin pressed down upon his chest; there was another sharp little stroke, this time behind his left ear, and with a deep sigh he seemed to sink into himself.

Scipio quietly touched the delicate point of his instrument with antiseptic wool, put it back into its case and watched his patient with a professional eye.

The man was dazed. He gripped his wife's hand until he almost caused her pain, and they could hear him mutter disconnected words:

"The highest possible appreciation. . . . My public position alone . . . sufficient reward . . . in its way a link between . . . provinces . . . our great Empire . . . daughter . . . daughter . . . daughter . . ." Then almost inaudibly ". . . nations."

For perhaps five minutes the Great Statesman was

silent, and his breathing was so regular that he might have been asleep.

"Will he go to sleep, doctor?" whispered Lady Repton.

Scipio Knickerbocker shook his head. "He'll be less rattled every minute, Ma'am," was his pronouncement, and once again he proved his science by the justice of his prognostication.

Sir Charles stood up, a little groggy, leant one hand on the back of a chair, took a deep breath, stood up more strongly, and said at last in a voice still weak but quite clear:—

"Thank you sir. How can I thank you? I seem to remember"—he passed his hand over his forehead—"I seem to remember some one telling me that you were born,—though I assure you it is impossible for us in England to distinguish it,—in one of our Britains Overseas. Sir, an action such as that which you have just done—a good deal if I may call it so," he went on more loudly, seizing Scipio's right hand between both of his, "is a cement of Empire! I will never forget it, never! Will you excuse me a moment, sir, while I speak to Lady Repton?"

With his best and most winning smile Sir Charles asked this question of Scipio, who for the tenth or eleventh time that evening bowed with a kink in the fourteenth vertebra.

He drew his wife into the hall.

"I suppose he wants payment on the spot, doesn't he, Maria? These specialists usually do."

"Yes dear," said Lady Repton, her old awe returning with his changed mood. "Yes dear, I'm afraid he does . . . he . . . in fact, I'm afraid I promised it him."

"How much?" said Sir Charles sternly.

"Well dear, it doesn't matter, does it? I'll pay."

"But it does matter. It matters a great deal, Maria.

It all comes out of *my* pocket in the long run. How much did he stipulate for?"

"A hundred pounds," said Lady Repton.

"Oh come," said Sir Charles, greatly relieved. "A hundred! That's a good lot. How often will he come for that?"

"He won't want to come again dear," said Lady Repton.

"What!" said Sir Charles, "a hundred pounds for that?"

"My dear—if you knew the difference!" said Lady Repton.

"Yes, yes, I know," he said impatiently, "the pain's gone. It can't be helped, and of course ninety's a broken sum. He'd have taken fifty Maria. I ought to have seen to this myself," he added.

And so, the matter settled, he returned.

"You'll allow me to leave you one moment with her ladyship," he said in his most winning manner. Then suddenly, "*Good-night*," and with a warm grasp of the hand Sir Charles left them.

Lady Repton was moved beyond words. She put into the young man's hand a packet of notes which she had carefully prepared. "It is nothing," she said, "it is nothing for what you have done, but oh, doctor, will it last?'

"It'll last for ever—at least," he corrected himself hurriedly, "they've all lasted so fur, and it's more'n a year since I did the first. It isn't the *kind* er thing that comes on again. 'Taint a growth." He was almost going to say what it was, when he remembered that he held the monopoly. Then, lest he should stay too long in that house where he was, after all, but a paid instrument, he very courteously bade her good-night, and as he went home carrying his little bag, Scipio reflected that he liked Maria, Lady Repton, better than he did her husband. But he remembered that operations for

Veracititis were, of their nature, causes for grievous disillusion.

He put the matter from his mind and took a cab back to his hotel and to bed.

Thus was Sir Charles Repton cured of Veracititis late upon Wednesday night, the 3rd of June, 1915, and he slept his old sleep.

CHAPTER XV

IT was Friday morning, the 5th of June, 1915, and the young and popular Prime Minister was busied in the Inaugural Ceremony of the Wardenship of the Court of Dowry.

Repton or no Repton, the place must be filled. Demaine was back and Demaine must be there on the front bench before there was an explosion.

The Inaugural Ceremony which introduces a Statesman to the Wardenship of the Court of Dowry, technically called "L'Acceptance," in strict constitutional practice requires the presence of at least three persons, the outgoing Warden (technically the Dischargee), the incoming Warden (technically the Discoverer) and the Sovereign; but since GHERKIN had, in spite of his eccentric Radicalism, raised the office to its present position, the outgoing Warden could be represented by proxy, though such a substitution was rarely made since it eliminated the quaint custom of the "Braise"—one hundred pounds one hundred shillings one hundred pence, and a new brass farthing specially minted for the occasion, the whole in a silver-gilt case, and handed over to the outgoer, to be regarded with historic respect, and some one of its coins to be kept as an heirloom.*

But Dolly, as he considered the situation on the Friday morning, Friday the 5th of June, 1915, could see no way out of it; he must simply tell Lady Repton

* There are two such farthings in the Heygate family to-day.

briefly, and best by telephone, that she must not dream of her husband's appearing at Court, even with a keeper, and that it would be necessary for the Repton household to forego the hundred sovereigns, the hundred shillings, the hundred pence and the new brass farthing specially minted for the occasion (the whole in a silver-gilt case), rather than have a scandal.

It was Friday, and he was glad to remember it, a Private Members' Day. There were no questions. There was all Saturday and Sunday before him. He would arrange for the Inauguration the very next week. He was already advised that the officials had been permitted by the highest authority, in view of Demaine's recent privations when he was blown out to sea in the little boat, treacherously abandoned by the foreign vessel and rescued by the willing hands, etc., to omit the final accolade with the ebony cudgel which had now for so many generations formed the last and most picturesque feature of the ritual.

He took up his telephone and asked the next room to put him on to the Reptons. He held the receiver while a servant told him that his message should be immediately communicated, and then in a few seconds, heard, to his great astonishment, not the tremulous tones of Maria, but the masterly voice of Sir Charles, as incisive and direct as of old, saying, "What is it?" in the tone of a man who must come at once to business and has many things to do.

"Oh!" cried Dolly into the machine, quite taken aback. "That's you, Repton, is it?"

"Yes, of course," came the answer shortly. "Well?"

"Oh nothing. Are you feeling better?"

"I don't know what you mean." This in restrained, quite unmistakable tones. "My headache's gone, if that's what you mean."

"Ye-es," said the Prime Minister, wondering what on earth to say. "Yes . . . Oh it's gone, has it?"

"Yes it has; I've told you that already." Then after a pause, "Look here, I'm really very busy. I've got three men here about that absurd concession. You gave me a free hand, and I can't wait. Hope I'm not rude. It's really very kind to ask after my health. You'll be in the House at twelve?" And the telephone suddenly rang off.

Dolly was in a stupor; he did what he always did, when things perplexed him; he sent for Edward.

"Edward," he said, "that cracked Dissenter has got three men in his house and is talking about the oil concession to them! Oh lord!"

The Prime Minister was evidently frightened and troubled, but he did not seem less frightened and more troubled than the occasion warranted. He couldn't make Repton out; there seemed to be another change.

Edward answered simply: "Why that makes three more who know,—that's all."

"Do get a taxi," said the Prime Minister, "and see what you can do." And he waited anxiously till Edward returned.

"Well?" said Dolly as he entered.

"Well!" said Edward. "He wasn't very polite, but—but—are you quite sure that you weren't worried when you saw him on Tuesday?"

"Worried," said Dolly, "I should think I was!"

"Well that's what I mean," said Edward a little uneasily. "Didn't you . . . didn't you perhaps exaggerate a little?"

"*Exaggerate!*" said Dolly, jumping up with all his youthful vigour, and looking for the moment less than forty-eight in his excitement, "Why man alive, he was wearing a huge great Easter Lily in his buttonhole, and he tried to wrestle with the butler in the hall!"

"Yes, but you know," said Edward, "there's gaiety in everybody, and it comes out now and——"

"Oh gaiety be blasted!" interrupted Dolly. "The man was raving!"

"Well, they wouldn't certify him anyhow," said Edward, "and he's not raving *now!* He's as sane as a waxen image, and as sharp as an unexpected pin. I'm glad *I'm* not doing business with him to-day."

"Look here," protested the Prime Minister. "If he wasn't off, why did he stay at home like a prisoner all Wednesday, with Lady Repton preventing any one seeing him? And what was he doing all yesterday, Thursday? Why didn't he come down to the House, eh, if he wasn't off?"

"I didn't say he wasn't ill," said Edward blandly. "I only said there might have been some exaggeration."

"Oh very well," ended the Prime Minister wearily, "oh very well!"

Edward came to a swift decision and telephoned first to the *Moon* then to the *Capon* privately that "it was all right about Repton; there'd been a mistake." His chief went out on the duties of the day.

Yet *another* change of plan! More bother! He would have to go through with the peerage now! He went gloomily down to the House of Commons! and learned that Charles Repton was already in his place, stiff, groomed and regular upon the Treasury bench.

Dolly came in nervously and shook hands with him. Sir Charles took his hand rather coldly; he did not see why a couple of days' headache which no one had heard about should be made the excuse for so much public affection. It emphasised the thing. And he sat through the first hour of the debate looking as if he would have been just as well pleased to be made less fuss about. "Anyhow," he thought to himself by way of consolation, "I shall be rid of it next week," and his mind turned in an equable fashion to his taking his seat in the Upper House and to what his first business there might be.

As he was so thinking George Mulross Demaine came in quietly by one of the side doors. As he entered there was a little subdued cheering from those who remembered the announcement of his approaching appointment. It flurried him a little. He sat down and tried to forget it, while the debate maundered on.

In the Lobbies Repton continued to suffer somewhat from occasional congratulations on his return to health. He did not easily understand them, and he was a trifle gruff in his replies. He was going into the library for a little peace when a messenger put a note into his hand; it was from the Duke of Battersea.

"More fuss!" he thought, but he went immediately with his stiff, upright gait to where that great Financier was waiting for him, and he greeted him warmly enough.

The Duke, like the business man he was, was very brief and to the point. He congratulated Charles Repton not (thank Heaven!) on having got rid of the slight headache which seemed to have filled the thoughts of too many people, but upon the great accession the Upper House was to receive, and then the Duke having said so much went on to what he really had to say, his pronunciation marred only by that slight lisp which ill-natured reports so constantly exaggerated. Sir Charles Repton (he said) would remember the very disgraceful case of the editor of the *Islington Hebdomadal Review?*

Charles Repton tried to remember, but could not.

Well, it wath the cathe of the man who had very properly got twenty yearth of the betht for thaying that he could reveal how old Ballymulrock had got his peerage . . . a dithgratheful cathe! There wath blackmail behind it!

Yes, Charles Repton could remember now, and he smiled a grim smile as he considered the peculiar ineptitude of that particular convict. Why old Ballymulrock was the seventh in the title, he had nothing a year, he

was a doddering old bachelor of eighty-seven, he had got it by a fluke from a half-nephew, and it was only an Irish elective peerage at that! The convict had pleaded a misprint! What a fool! Yes, Sir Charles Repton could remember the case. What about it? "I'm not going to take any action to save him," he said sharply, "if that's what you want: he deserved all he got! If you want some one get Birdwhistlethorpe; Isaacs that was: he knows North London."

"Noh, noh, noh," said the aged Duke of Battersea in alarm, "you mithunderthand me!" And he went on to tell the outgoing Warden that they were determined to bring this sort of thing before the House of Lords in a Resolution. Would he move?

"I don't see what I've got to do with it," said Repton shortly.

The Duke smiled as he had smiled years ago, when he produced Lord Benthorpe's paper and brought that now forgotten personage to heel. Had Sir Charles seen what the *Moon* had been saying that very day?

No, Sir Charles hadn't. He supposed it was about the oil concessions. He paid no attention to the *Moon*. But Edward's telephone to the *Moon* and the *Capon* had borne dreadful fruit. Each editor had thought to have regained his freedom.

The Duke of Battersea's smile grew more portentous; he discovered a cutting in the inner pocket of a coat which somehow or other always looked greasy upon him, and as Sir Charles read it, his face darkened.

"It's pretty scandalous," he said as he laid it down. For the leader in the *Moon* gave it to be understood in no very roundabout way that there had been a deal over Repton's peerage.

"The *Capon'th* worth, *far* worth!" insinuated the Duke of Battersea.

"Is it?" said Sir Charles, "indeed!"

"Yeth, indeed yeth," said the aged Duke, putting

the paper forward as though over a counter; and Sir Charles Repton could not forbear to read it. It certainly *was* worse; it simply said point blank that the Burmah Oil Concession was the price of Repton's promotion to the Upper House. And the passage ended with these words:

"We have no desire to add to a domestic affliction which no friend of the Government regrets more sincerely than we do ourselves, and we are willing to believe that the unfortunate gentleman, who we fear can never again take his old place in public life, was himself quite innocent of any such dealing; but ambitions other than his own may have been concerned in this matter, and the giving of permanent legislative power to a man who now notoriously can no longer take part in active public life, does but add to the scandal."

That decided him! He would nip off that headache legend at once, and sharply!

"Yes," he said, "I'll move as soon as you like, and the sooner the better." He did not say it as though he was granting a favour; and it was easy to see that the Duke was a little afraid of him:—

After a pause during which the two men rose to part, the old gentleman suggested that Methlinghamhurst should speak after him.

"Messlingham *who?*" said Repton, puzzled. The name was unfamiliar to him.

"No, not Methlinghamhurtht! *Meth*linghamhurtht," said the Duke of Battersea, rather too loud. "*Meth*-linghamhurtht!"

Sir Charles shook his head, still puzzled. "I daresay he's all right," he said, all starch.

"*You* know," said the Duke of Battersea, craning forward in a confidential way, "Clutterbuck that wath."

"Oh! Clutterbuck! Yes, I remember. Well? Can he speak?"

"Not very well," hesitated the Duke of Battersea, "but you know he wanted . . ."

"I really don't care," said Sir Charles moving away. "Anyhow I'll do it."

The Duke was profuse in his thanks.

. . . . . .

Charles Repton returned to the House of Commons. Another message!

"The Prime Minister begged to see Sir Charles Repton:" really there was no end to the number of people wanting to see him that day! Charles Repton went towards Dolly's room with such muscles showing upon his face as would have made any one afraid to say another word about the headache,—but it was not of the headache, at least not of that directly, that Dolly had to speak.

"Repton," he said apologetically and in some dread, "I'm afraid I made arrangements for a proxy next week —I mean for L'Acceptance you know."

"Oh you did!" said Sir Charles, really nettled. "You might have asked me first I think!"

"Well, you see," began his unfortunate chief,—

"As a fact I don't see," said Repton drily, "but I suppose you've put it right. I've written to say I should be there."

"Oh yes, certainly, certainly," said Dolly hurriedly, "I've changed it." As a fact he'd done nothing of the kind and was wondering what he should say to the proxy. "Certainly!"

"All right," said Charles Repton moving towards the door. "That's all, I suppose?"

"Yes, that's all," said Dolly, with perhaps a hundred more things to say. "I'll see that you get notice of the exact hour."

"Of course," said Charles Repton briefly, and he shut the door quietly but firmly behind him.

. . . . . .

The inaugural ceremony, though shorn for some years of the backward entrance which was its most picturesque feature, and now (though not as a precedent) of the accost with the ebony cudgel, was impressive enough. The silver-gilt case with the Three Hundred and One specially minted Coins had been put into Charles Repton's Seisin by the Symbol of the Flask of Palm Oil, and was already on its way to his house; the tinkling shoes had been rapidly put on and off, and Demaine had sworn fealty for sergeantry in Ponthiue and the Seniory of Lucq, and all the embroglio was done.

Lord Repton (for he was content with that simple title—in the Manor of Giggleswick) was present for the first time upon the red benches, awaiting the moment for the debate upon the Resolution in which he was to open and move.

In the House of Commons George Mulross Demaine, who for the last few days had been coaching steadily in the duties of his post and especially in the really difficult technicalities of replying to questions, was reading his notes for the last time in the comfortable room assigned to his office, and repeating to himself in a low tone the words he had so carefully committed to memory. Edward was with him to give him courage; and he needed such companionship.

At last he was summoned.

The House was very full for question-time, for it was known or suspected that something of importance would take place that day. The full nature of the crisis had been understood by very few, but the disappearance of Demaine and his return, his terrible adventures in the fishing-boat, his night at sea, the dastardly action of the

foreign crew, and the heroic succour which had ultimately reached him were public property.

The silent and little known young member whose disappearance from the benches under the gallery would never have been noticed, was half a hero already in the popular mind, and had become particularly dear to his colleagues during the anxious moments when he was believed to be lost, and when the press of London had worked that mystery for all it was worth.

The House of Commons knows a *Man*.

There was, therefore, loud and hearty cheering, which, according to the beautiful tradition of our public life, was confined to no one part of the assembly, when, that happy Friday, George Mulross entered rapidly from behind the Speaker's chair, stumbled over the outstretched foot of the Admiralty, his second uncle by marriage, and took his seat for the first time among his new colleagues upon the Treasury Bench.

The Prime Minister accompanied him. Congratulations suitable to the occasion were to be seen in the gestures of those in his immediate neighbourhood, and he himself wore the blest but sickly smile of a man who is about to be hanged but who is possessed of a fixed faith in a happy eternity.

Only one question was set down to him; he had read it and re-read it; he had read and re-read the typewritten answer which Mr. Sorrel had furnished him and which he had now got by heart beyond, he hoped, the possibility of error. The questioner had chivalrously offered to withdraw his query in deference to the fatigues and anxieties through which the new Warden of the Court of Dowry had so recently passed, but the Prime Minister, though appreciative of that offer, rather determined that his dear young relative should win his spurs; and trivial as the subject was, Question No. 31 was by far the most important upon the paper for most of those present.

It concerned (of course) the wreck which still banged

about, the sport of wind and wave, upon the Royal Sovereign Shoals. This aching tooth of Empire had cropped up again in yet another aspect. The member for Harrowell, a landowner upon that coast, wanted to know whether it was not a fact that large planks studded, he was ashamed to say, with long rusty nails, had not drifted shorewards from the wreck and grievously scratched such persons as were indulging in mixed bathing just off the popular and rapidly rising seaside resort which lay a little east by north of the wretched derelict.

Question No. 29 was answered, Question 30 was answered. Demaine's ordeal had come.

He heard a low mumbling noise some distance down the benches which he would never have taken to be the single word "Thirty-one" had not his mother's half-sister's husband the Chancellor of the Exchequer given him a sharp dig in the ribs with his elbow and jolted him on to his feet. His hands shook like a motor car at rest as he began his reply.

"I have nothing to tell my right honourable gentleman—I mean my honourable gentleman . . ." Here there was a pause, painful to all present with the exception of one ribald fellow who cackled twice and then was silent. . . "I have nothing to add," George Mulross began again with a lump in his throat, "in reply to my honourable friend—to what my predecessor said in reply to a similar" (another pause) . . . "Oh,—*question*—upon the tenth of this month."

He had read all of it out now, anyhow, and he sat down, a trifle unsteadily, feeling for the seat.

"Arre we to onderstand," boomed the voice of the inevitable fanatic, "that the carrgo of GIN is yet aboorrd . . .?"

"Hey! what?" said Demaine over his shoulder, with a startled air.

"Get up and ask for notice," whispered a colleague

very hurriedly. "Get up and say 'I must ask for notice of that question.' Say 'I must ask for notice of that question.' Get up quick."

Demaine got up, took hold of the box, turned his back upon the questioner and looking full at the harmless and startled Opposition said, not without menace: "I must ask for a notice of that question"—and sat down.

There were a few more sympathetic cheers and all was well. The Warden of the Court of Dowry was launched upon his great career.

Meanwhile, beyond the Central Hall, Lord Repton of Giggleswick was rising for the first time among his Peers.

That House also was full and was prepared to give the spare towering figure and the stoical face a sympathetic hearing, for the recognition of a man who had served his country so faithfully and so well and who had recently suffered a temporary malady of so distressing a nature was universal and sincere.

The House of Lords knows a *Man*.

Lord Repton, even as plain Sir Charles, had always been an admirable parliamentary speaker: not only quick at debate but with a grave and lucid delivery which, coupled with his intimate grasp of detail and the sense of balanced judgment behind his tone, made his one of the most effective voices in our public life.

It would be difficult to say by what art he contrived to give in that large assembly the impression of speaking as quietly as though he were in a private room, and yet so managed that every word of his—every syllable,—was heard in every corner of the House.

In the Peeresses' Gallery women in mauve, heliotrope, eau-de-nil, crapaud mort, and magenta, made a brilliant scheme of colour.

The Lords, who upon occasions of privilege are by custom robed, gave to the splendid place the deeper

tone of red plush and white pelts with small black tails which is otherwise reserved for such great occasions of state as the Opening of Parliament, the Coronation, an Impeachment or a Replevin at Large; at the bar a crowd of Commoners pressed, many of whom recognised in the faces before them those of brothers, fathers, first cousins, debtors, creditors and clients in business. It was an animated and an impressive scene, and the audience, large as it was, would doubtless have been larger but for an unfortunate blunder by which the Eton and Harrow match and a particularly interesting rehearsal of the Mizraim dance were both fixed for that very afternoon.

As it was, the two hundred or more Peers present were finely representative of all that is best and worst in the national life. The aged Duke of Battersea had made a point not only of coming but of speaking upon such an occasion; the Bishops had turned up in full force, and the Colonial Peers, now happily added to the ancient House, were remarkable not only for their strict attention to this historic business, but for their somewhat constrained attitudes: not one was absent from his seat.

The report of a speech, however excellent, is but a dull reflection of the original, as all may judge who consider the contrast between the entrancing rhetoric which daily holds spellbound the House of Commons and the plain prose appearing in the morning papers.

It would ill repay the reader for the courtesy and charm she has shown throughout the perusal of these pages, were I to inflict upon her a mere verbatim transcript of Lord Repton's famous harangue. But the gist of it well merits record here, not only because it did much to kill a poisonous spirit which had till then been growing in English journalism—but also because it was in itself a typical and splendid monument of the things that build up the soul of a great man.

He began in the simplest manner with a review of

what had determined some of them to bring forward this Resolution. It needed no reiteration upon his part, and indeed the matter was so painful that the mere recalling of it must be made as brief as possible.

"It has been suggested that places in that House are acquired by process of purchase.

"There, in plain English, is the accusation."

He would remark in passing that the cowards and slanderers—he did not hesitate to use strong language—(and even the sanctity of the precincts could not check a murmur of approval), the cowards and slanderers who brought forward that general accusation dared not make it particular.

"In one case," he said, turning gravely to the place where he expected to see but was disappointed not to see the very aged frame of Lord Ballymulrock, "in one case which referred to a peer whose health I am distressed to say has made it impossible for him to be present upon this occasion" (a protest from an exceedingly old man who sat folded up on high—it was Bally himself!), "in one case a direct accusation has been made. . . Melords, you know the issue. An appeal still lies, and it is not for me to deal with a matter which is *sub judice*; but apart from that case, these anonymous hacks who have for so long corrupted or attempted to corrupt the public mind in respect to this House, confine themselves to generalities upon which the law can take no hold."

It was upon this very account that the general resolution of which he had spoken had been framed, and he would pass at once from the unsavoury recollection of such acts, to that part of his argument which he thought would have most weight with his fellow-subjects.

"This House, including the more recent creations, the Colonial Peers, and the ex-officio additions with which a recent—and in my opinion a beneficent reform—has recruited it, still numbers less than fifteen hundred men. Of these the ex-officio members, the lords spiritual

(and he bowed to the Bishop of Shoreham, who was deaf) "the elected members from the Britains Overseas (among whom I am glad to see present the Nerbuddah Yah) between them account for no less than forty-two. Two hundred and eighty" (he quoted from a paper in his hand) "are imbeciles, minors or permanent invalids; somewhat over fifty are for one reason or another incapacitated from attendance at their debates; ten are in goal."

"Now, Melords," he continued, "of the eleven hundred remaining—they are roughly eleven hundred, what do we find? We find"—emphatically striking his right hand fist into his left-hand palm,—"we find no less than five hundred and twelve to be the sons of their fathers—or in some other way direct heirs: ninety-eight to have succeeded to their titles from collaterals of the first or of the second degree; sixteen to have succeeded in some more distant manner; eleven to owe their position to the revival of ancient tenures: the claims of six to have been recently proved through the female line; and one by Warranty and Novel Disseizin. What remains?"

He looked round the eager assembly before him with an attitude of the head dignified but wonderfully impressive.

"Melords, I ask again, what remains? *Less than four hundred men*, the representatives of all the chief energies of our national life. We have here the great champions of industry, the great admirals of our fleets, the great generals of our armies—and I am happy to include the Salvation Army, (the head of that great organisation lifted his biretta)—men who have distinguished themselves in every conceivable path of public life, who have loyally served their country and many of whom after such service are still honourably poor."

At this phrase, which was evidently the approach to his peroration, many Peers who had hitherto been sitting with their knees apart, crossed one leg over the other;

some few who, on the contrary, had had their legs crossed, uncrossed them and reposed both feet upon the floor; more than one took the opportunity to recline his head upon his right hand, and the most venerable member of the bench of Bishops coughed in a manner that would have wrung a heart of stone.

When these slight interruptions were over, Lord Repton of Giggleswick found it possible to proceed. He showed by a strict process of inquiry how those to whom the abominable suggestion might conceivably apply, could not by any stretch of the imagination amount to eighty in number.

"Less than eighty men, Melords, in an assembly of fifteen hundred! Hardly five per cent.—hardly, if I may use a bold metaphor, thirteen pence in the pound! It is by this proportion alone, even did these detestable falsehoods contain—which they do not—a grain of truth, that our whole body is forsooth to be judged! But, Melords, who are these eighty men, if I do not insult them by permitting my argument to approach their names?

"I will not cite my own case; my public career is open for any man to examine, and I think I know the temper of my own people too well to delay upon that score. But there are around me others perhaps (I know not) more sensitive, or less experienced in the petty villainies of the world, than am I, who may have thought themselves especially marked out.

"I ask against which of them could such an accusation be levelled by name, without the certitude of such a result in any Court of Justice as would silence the mouth of the libeller for many years? Is it, Melords, the man to whom we owe the great reservoir at Sing Yan? Is it that world-famous Englishman who by his organising ability, his untiring industry and his knowledge of men, has built up the United Sausage Company's emporiums throughout the length and breadth of the land?

"I might extend the list indefinately: Melords, to no one of these, to no one member of this House I venture to say, can words of this kind be addressed without their falsity being apparent almost without need for proof.

"I repeat in the words of Burke, 'No, no, no, a thousand times no.' I am not ashamed to recall the glorious phrase with which these walls echoed to the voice of Ephraim ten years ago: 'Give me such principles as these and I will trample them into the dust beneath my feet!'"

Having said so much, Lord Repton sat down, and it is a tribute to the fire and the conviction of the man that a young heiress of African Origin but recently married, who had been listening intently from the Peeresses' Gallery throughout the latter part of the speech, gave a low moan and fainted clean away.

Her young form was borne down to the buttery by a strong posse of attendants where the air from the Terrace soon revived her. I mention the incident only as a signal proof of the oratorical powers that had illumined Repton's great career.

After such an effort Lord Methlinghamhurst necessarily somewhat palled, especially as an imperfection in his diction, failing eyesight and a certain loss of memory compelled him to make long and uncomfortable pauses over the large printed slip which he held in his hand, but it was over at last, and the Duke of Battersea rose amid the evident interest of such as remained to hear him, no less than five of whom were concerned with himself in the Anapootra Ruby Mines.

The great financier did well to interpose upon such an occasion. His lisp, with which the House was now familiar, was the only impediment to a sincere and vigorous piece of English. There was not a word which the most exuberant would presume to add, nor one which the most fastidious would dare to erase.

The proceedings had occupied something close upon

three-quarters of an hour, and the Senate, unused to such delays, was impatient to pass to the vote, when, to the universal horror of that hall, Ballymulrock tottered to his feet. There was almost a stampede. Luckily the Aged Man was as brief as he was inaudible. It was a couple of squeaks, several mutters, and a collapse. They proceeded to put the question.

The Peers flocked back again to their places in great numbers; others stood ready for the Lobbies—but there was no need.

It was one of those rare moments when many hundreds of hearts, to quote a wild and lovely poem, beat as one; and with a silent unanimity which eye-witnesses declare to have formed the most impressive sight since the first great review of Specials upon Salisbury Plain, the Resolution was adopted.

Thus was destroyed, let us hope for ever, what was rapidly growing to be a formidable legend and one that would have undermined the security of the State and the honour of our public life in the eyes of rival nations.

It was not the least of the services which Charles Repton had rendered to the State, and as we raise our grateful hats to Providence for the recovery that made his action possible, let us not forget the genius of the Young Canadian Doctor who was the author of that miraculous moment in a story of a thousand years.

. . . . . .

The Private Members' time was ended. The House sat on upon the Broadening of the Streets Bill, the intense unpopularity of which rendered it especially urgent.

When the House of Commons rose, near midnight, Dolly and Dimmy went out together by the door of the private rooms into the cool air and there in the courtyard were the glowing lamps of Mary's motor car. She beckoned them and they got in.

"You got to come to supper to-night," she said mysteriously. "They'll all be there."

Dimmy was agreeable. Dolly tried to plead something but she shut him up, and after them in single file raced through London half a dozen taxis and cars and broughams all making in a stream for St. James's.

It made such a supper-party as Mary Smith alone in London could gather!

Her sister-in-law, with the Leader of the Opposition, and his brother; his right-hand man who had been Chancellor in the last administration; his nephew, the Postmaster General; Dolly himself; Dolly's brother-in-law, the Secretary for India; his little nephew's wife's cousin at the Board of Trade, and his stepmother's brother at the Admiralty, sat down,—and so did Dimmy, who was there without his wife, and also, I regret to say, without a stud, or rather without the head of a stud, in his shirt; for somehow it had broken off.

But the reader will have but an imperfect picture of that jolly table if she imagines that it was a mere family party.

Our public life is a larger thing than that! Of the five members of the two front benches who were not connected by marriage, two were present; the Minister for Education who could draw such screamingly funny things on blotting-paper, and Beagle, back two days before from Berlin, who could imitate a motor car with his mouth better than any man in Europe. And there also, by a sort of licence, was the Duke of Battersea, brought by Charlie Fitzgerald and his wife.

They had already sat down when William Bailey, whom no one had invited, came ponderously and good-humouredly in, affected to stare at the Duke, and made a place for himself as far as possible from that controller of hemispheres, who was in his usual chair on Mary Smith's right hand, with bulbous baggy eyes for none but her.

William Bailey smiled all that evening and smiled especially at Dimmy—but he remained very silent; when, a little before two, they began to make a move, he had not said a dozen words—and Dimmy was exceedingly grateful.

Nay, his friendship extended further: he saw Demaine as they all got up from table nervously stuffing a corner of the cloth in mistake for his handkerchief into his trousers pocket.

"Look out, Dimmy!" he said.

Dimmy jumped, and the tablecloth jumped with him, and then a crash—a great crash of broken glass, and the falling of candles.

Mary Smith was very nearly annoyed, but on such an occasion she forgave him.

. . . . . .

North of the Park, for now two hours, Lord Repton of Giggleswick had slept an easy sleep.

ON
THE PSEUDOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS.
OF
CARYLL'S GANGLIA

A PAMPHLET

WHICH the reader need not read. It is quite as easy to understand the book without it.

EXTRACT from a lecture delivered, for a grossly insufficient fee, by a professor of great popular reputation at the Royal Institution on January 26th, 1915 :—

"The *Review of Comparative Biology* in its October issue contained a short and modest paper over the name of Henry Upton which is destined to influence modern thought more profoundly than anything that has appeared since *Lux Mundi* or the *Origin of Species*. Henry Upton has been taken from us. Or, to use a phrase consecrated by his own reverent quotation of it, he has 'Passed beyond the Veil,' he has crossed the bar ; but short as the time is since this brief essay was given to the world, his name is already famous.

"You will have heard the echoes of passionate discussions upon his famous theory ; it is my business this afternoon to put before you in clear and popular language that you can easily understand, what that theory was ; and when I have done so I make no doubt that you will see why it has been thought so transcendently important.

" Briefly, Henry Upton declared himself finally convinced that between Man and the Simius Gabiensis there existed a differentiation so marked as to destroy all possibility of any recent common origin for the two species.

" When I add that Simius Gabiensis is but the technical name for the Ringtailed Baboon of our childhood you will at once appreciate what a revolution such a pronouncement must work if it can be sustained ; and it has been sustained !

" It is common knowledge and will be familiar to the youngest child in this room that the Ringtailed Baboon is the highest of the Anthropoids, and the one nearest approaching the majesty of the Human Species—Homo Sapiens ; and if between him and ourselves the link of affinity prove far removed, it seemed indeed as though the whole edifice of modern biology and of modern thought itself will fall to the ground.

" The superficial differences to be discovered between a cleanly and well-bred gentleman and the Ringtailed Baboon are common property : the beard in the Anthropoid is not so clearly defined as in the allied organism of Man, but covers the whole face ; the superciliary arch is more prominent, the diaphragm tessarated and refulgent, while the Cardiac Aneries are at once paler and less vasculate in form : the rings upon the tail are of course peculiar to the Simian, and almost universally absent in the human species, while the speech of the latter is far more complex and articulate than that of the former.

" But I need not detain this cultured audience with considerations quite unworthy of physical science. All the weight of real evidence pointed to the close relationship between the two types, and it was a commonplace of the classroom that in all fundamentals the two animals betrayed an ancestor less remote than that of the dog and the wolf. Now, since Henry Upton's work appeared, we are certain that that ancestor is more remote than the

ancestor of the hippopotamus and the Jersey cow, and probably more remote than that of the mongoose and the great Auk.

"In every text-book we read (and we believed the statement) that between a really poor man and the highest specimens of our race lay a gulf wider than that which separated the former from the Ringtailed Baboon and even from the Gorilla and the Barbary Ape. To-day all that is gone!

"Now let me turn to the evidence. Briefly, again, Henry Upton proved that CARYLL'S GANGLIA were not, as had been imagined, unimportant or useless organs, but were organically necessary to the full conduct of man.

"It had of course been known since Caryll first described and mapped these ganglia, that they were present in Man and absent in all other animals. But they were not unique in this, and the obscure part which they seemed to play in our economy attracted little attention from the student. Suddenly these humble agglutinations of organic matter were lifted into the blaze of fame by an Englishman whose name will not perish so long as our civilisation endures. For Henry Upton showed that in these ganglia lay the capital distinction between man and his congener; if I, myself, for instance, differ in any way from 'Pongo' in Regent's Park, it is to Caryll's Ganglia, under Providence, that I owe the privilege.

"Henry Upton was not the man to proceed upon *a priori* reasoning, or to state as a conclusion what was still a bare hypothesis. He had suspected the truth ten years before committing it to print: 'they were ten years of anxiety, nay, of agony, during which a bolder or less scrupulous man might snatch from him the merit of prior discovery; but he felt it was his duty to Science to continue the vast labour and the patient research, until he could speak once and for all.

"Upton tabulated in all the enormous number of

57,752 recorded experiments. He first noted the comparative sizes of the ganglia, in children and adults, in women and in men, showing them to be larger in men than in women, and in children rudimentary before the seventh year. He next proved that in certain professions, notably in those of the money-lender, the solicitor and the politician, hypertrophy of the ganglia was to be discovered. The conclusions to which this pointed will soon be evident. His theory already began to take shape. Luckily for English science, this great man was possessed of private means. He organised a staff of enthusiastic young workers who occupied themselves in treading upon the toes of people in omnibuses, sitting upon top hats, asking direct questions of slight acquaintances concerning their financial affairs and coughing violently and with long, uninterrupted spasms at the most exciting moments of melodramatic plays. The result was in each case tabulated, and in over 5.08 per cent, of the cases it was possible with care to discover the position of the ganglia in those who responded to the stimuli. Without a single exception the importance of the ganglia varied directly with the self-restraint exercised against such stimuli. Those who struck out, swore, or in any other way betrayed immediate violence, were found to possess small and sometimes partially atrophied C. G's. Those who protested sullenly or confined themselves to angry glances were normal ; those who contained themselves as though nothing had happened, invariably possessed ganglia of a large and peculiarly healthy type, while those who actually expressed enjoyment and begged for a repetition of the performance had ganglia of so astonishing a size as to cause protuberances on either side of the head, for Caryll's Ganglia lie (as most of you probably know) a little south-east and by east of the Aural Cavity.

"It might by this time have seemed sufficiently proved that Caryll's Ganglia were the seat of all that

restraint and balance upon which human society depends, but Upton was not satisfied until he had clinched the process of proof by a negative experiment upon animals : —And here let me point out in passing that had certain well-meaning fanatics their own way, this great revelation would never have been made. The horse, the pig, the common house-fly, the bee, the dog and the wild goose, to give but a few examples, were severally tested, and in each case it was discovered that a clout, a fillip, or any other simple stimulus was at once responded to. In no case was a trace of Caryll's Ganglia to be found.

" You all know the end !

" The essay was printed, Upton's name had already flown to the utmost corners of the globe, when he read in some obscure narrative of travel that the little armadillo that can sleep without a pillow, though possessing no ganglia, was capable of the same balance and restraint as man, could control himself under all but the most violent stimuli, conceal his most poignant necessities, and smile in the presence of death.

" Upton was a Scientist of the Scientists. One single exception and he would retract from his position. He sailed for the Amazon, interviewed the armadillo, but at the first pin he thrust into the fleshy portion of the animal's steaks, a little below the armoured belt, it belied the false report by turning savagely round and biting off his head. His remains were reverently brought home to London. He lies in Westminster Abbey, the last and perhaps the greatest of martyrs to scientific truth.

" If Henry Upton's immortal achievement seems for a moment to have broken down the very keystone in the arch of social progress, and to have made null the whole structure of biological truth ; if it leaves Man no longer propped up by a knowledge of cousinship and brotherhood with the beasts of the field, but all alone, an exile upon earth, nevertheless we must take courage. The Bishop of Shoreham has told us (Etc., etc., etc.)."

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